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ABSTRACT

Noting that since 1979, the English course in Western Australian secondary schools has been reshaped into two separate courses--one for college admission and one in English literature--and that procedures for student assessment and examination have altered considerably, this volume reports on an extensive survey undertaken to discover how these changes have affected the teaching and learning of English in the Western Australian secondary schools. Following a brief section describing the basis and design of the study, the first major part of the document discusses the background and issues of secondary English education in the Western Australian schools. Part two discusses case studies of English courses conducted in nine high schools, while part three presents the findings of these studies, including conclusions and recommendations. Appendixes include the letter sent to the principals of the case study schools and questions from teacher, student, and parent interview forms. (HTH)

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THE
MARTIN REPORT

WHAT GOES ON IN ENGLISH LESSONS

Case Studies from Government High Schools
Western Australia

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1980

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ERRATA

p.iii,	line 2.	'1979' should read '1969'.
p.xiii,	line 26.	'unsuccessful' should read 'successful'.
p.6,	line 10.	'one thousand two hundred and ninety' should read '129'.
p.8,	lines 6,7.	These lines should read: A consensus statement from the English department as a group. In some cases, a multiple viewpoint description of a particular lesson, chosen by the teacher. These consisted of
p.17,	line 32.	'... while we're not going ...' should read '... while we're going ...'
p.21,	line 5.	'first-aid' should read 'first-year'.
p.61,	lines 14-16.	'The only experience ...' should read 'The only thing we know with any certainty is that people learn their language through experience ...'

FOREWORD

The subject English in Western Australian secondary schools has undergone marked changes in the last decade. Since 1979 what was then the Leaving English course has been re-shaped into two separate courses for Tertiary Admission Examination in English and in English literature. The Junior Certificate and the High School Certificate have been replaced by the Achievement Certificate and procedures for assessment and examination have altered considerably, commensurate with the new philosophy underlying the subject.

In the last decade, no comprehensive research has undertaken to discover how these changes have affected the teaching and learning of English in State secondary schools. In 1978, I commissioned Miss Nancy Martin, formerly Head of the Department of English at the London University Institute of Education, to conduct a major survey and to write a report, her brief being to explore and describe the teaching and learning of English in State secondary schools, to identify the most influential factors in that process, and to make recommendations about future directions.

A steering committee concerned with design, direction and review consisted of Miss Nancy Martin, Mr P. Gunning and Mr W. Hann (Superintendents of English, Mr M. Angus (Superintendent of Research Branch), Mr P. Deschamp (Education Officer, Research Branch) and Miss M. O'Neill (A/Education Officer, Curriculum Branch).

In presenting this report, I wish particularly to thank Miss Martin for the expertise, thoroughness and sensitivity she has brought to a formidable task. Mr Deschamp, at the Research Branch, assisted in developing and analysing the questionnaire to all secondary schools, and in developing the research approaches used. In gathering the information and in writing the report, Miss Martin has been assisted by Miss O'Neill of the Curriculum Branch.

I also wish to acknowledge the co-operation of the schools, teachers and students who contributed to the compilation of the report, particularly those involved in the case studies.

As well as describing the present state of English teaching in our schools, this report will offer a significant contribution to the emergence of clearer understandings and directions for the subject English in the 1980s. I trust it will receive close attention.

D. Mossenson
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF EDUCATION

PROFILE OF MISS NANCY MARTIN

Nancy Martin was formerly Head of the Department of English at London University Institute of Education, and retired from this position in 1979.

The team at the London Institute, first under the direction of James Britton, and from 1970 of Nancy Martin, have made an influential contribution to the teaching of writing both at research and development levels. Nancy Martin was a member of the research team which produced *The Development of Writing Abilities, 11 to 18* and was Director (1971 to 1976) of the development project, *Writing across the Curriculum* - the dissemination phase of the writing research.

Miss Martin has also worked extensively in the field of education in North America and Australia. She was Visiting Research Professor in the Graduate School at Rutgers University, New Jersey, in 1975 and the University of Calgary in 1979. She has taught Summer Sessions in the University of British Columbia, and has worked with the Toronto Board of Education and the Borough of North York, Toronto. In 1977 she worked for six months in Western Australia, sponsored jointly by the Education Department and the University of Western Australia. During that time she was consultant to the Language and Learning Project with the State Education Department, and to the federally funded research in the English faculty of the University into 'The Development of Writing Abilities 15 to 18'. She was also concerned with the Education faculty of the University in developing programmes of studies in Language in Education for Dip.Ed., B.Ed. and M.Ed. courses. In her latest work in Alberta she has been assisting the Language Arts department of the University in developing studies of the role of the spoken language in learning, and, in conjunction with the Education Department of Alberta, with exploring ways of evaluating curriculum guides for schools.

Miss Martin has been involved in major publications on the teaching of English, and in language in Education. She has also written a series of source books for students.

Among her publications are

BRITTON, MARTIN & ROSEN. *The Multiple Marking of English Composition.* HMSO, London, 1966.

BRITTON, BURGESS, MARTIN, McLEOD & ROSEN. *The Development of Writing Abilities, 11 to 18.* Schools Council Research Studies. MacMillan, 1975.

MARTIN, DARCY, NEWTON & PARKER. *Writing and Learning across the Curriculum 11-16,* and associated pamphlets. Ward Lock, London, 1976.

MARTIN et al. *Understanding Children Talking.* Penguin Education, 1976.

MARTIN, N. *Here, Now and Beyond.*
Truth to Tell.
Half-way.
Oxford University Press, London.

Miss Martin contributed chapters to *Language across the Curriculum,* Marland, Heinemann Educational, 1977.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A great many people have contributed to this study. First, we thank all the teachers in the case study schools who gave so fully of their time and their ideas, and made us welcome in their classes. We thank too, the principals of the schools for their co-operation, and the students and parents who helped us.

In addition to the schools directly involved in the study, we are grateful to all the schools who completed the long questionnaire, and those other schools and their teachers, and the teachers in tertiary institutions, and the many members of the Education Deaprtment who gave us advice and practical help on so many occasions.

We thank all those people who gave us tape-recorded interviews (over one hundred) and who arranged small seminars for us in the planning stages of the study; and especially we thank our transcriber, Kenneth Brown, who worked day after day against time to get the tapes transcribed.

I personally express my thanks to Dr Mossenson, Director-General of Education, and to the Education Department of Western Australia for the opportunity the study gave me to explore ways of evaluating work in schools, and in the course of this work, to see many things of great worth and interest to me. I am particularly grateful too, to the superintendents of English, Mr Gunning and Mr Hann, and to Mr Angus, Superintendent of Research, for their always-available support.

Finally, I wish to express my deep appreciation of the other two members of our three-man team, Marnie O'Neill of the Curriculum Branch, and Phil Deschamp of the Research Branch. During the six months that I was in Western Australia we worked closely in setting up the study and carrying out the field work, and the first two parts of the report are the result of our joint efforts. For Part III, however, which could only be written after the case studies were completed, I am responsible. The chief burden of seeing the report through the press has been borne by my colleagues. I am deeply grateful.

Nancy Martin

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A NOTE TO THE SKIMMER

First read the introductory item, *What we set out to do, and not to do.* This will give the dimensions of the study.

If you are primarily interested in what went on in the schools, sample the case studies in Part II.

If you are interested in research and research procedures read the *Design of the Study* and its research basis.

The findings are given in Part III -*Innovation and English, Summary of Determiners* and *Characteristics of Schools Where English Is Successful.*

The view of English which informs Parts I and III (together with a brief historical perspective is given in *What Is English?* (Part I), and *Implications for the Classroom* in Part III. These are a pair - theoretical and practical aspects.

The three essays in Part I tackle current issues - literacy, examinations and teacher development.

If you are interested in future directions, read *Prospect* in Part I, and *Looking Forward* in Part III.

By now you will know whether you want to read the book in sequence.

WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO, AND NOT TO DO

- We set out to survey and report on English teaching and learning in Government secondary schools. Owing to limitations of time and money we could not look at English throughout the various parts of the educational system. We did not consider English in the primary schools, nor in non-Government schools, nor in tertiary institutions.

- We did not attempt to produce a comprehensive survey, though there was one comprehensive item in our study, namely the questionnaire to all secondary schools about the resources for English.

- We settled to do an intensive study of English in a small number of schools - a 5 percent sample, which looked manageable and would allow us to spend a week or more in the larger schools and three to four days in the smaller ones. We agreed to make six full case studies and also to look at the effect on English of special innovations in a further three schools.

- We did not attempt to define 'English' during the six months of the study, preferring to focus our attention on how it was perceived by the teachers, students and parents in the case study schools; and to so present the case studies that their perceptions of English made an independent contribution to the Report.

- We did not set out to produce an evaluation of the case study schools, and have not done so.

- We planned to articulate our own view of what English is *after* we had finished work in the schools.

- We agreed to use this account of what English is to try to identify, *in general terms*, the characteristics of those schools where we thought English teaching and learning was unsuccessful.

- We set out to use this account together with the characteristics of schools where English seemed successful to make an analysis of those features in the school contexts - internal and external - which influence the directions and quality of English teaching and learning. At this point our study would become directly evaluative.

- From this analysis and from the picture of English presented by the case study schools we aimed to make recommendations which might assist the Director-General and his staff, the teachers in the schools and a wider public of teachers in Australia.

HOW THEY SEE ENGLISH

A PAGE OF BRIEF QUOTATIONS

English is where you're taught to speak properly, not slang - to make a proper gentleman or lady of yourself.

Year 8 student

To me English is an art. Nobody can really tell you how to write. We have to go our own way now.

Year 12 student

English is only repeating the same stuff we've already learnt.

Student

Poetry, magic and life - that's what English is about.

Teacher

Children are very realistic; most of them haven't got their minds polluted with too many overshades and undershades.

Parent

English is to make us more interesting people.

Year 9 student

You learn about poetry and Shakespeare for the kids in the future that might like to learn about them. *You* might not like to learn about them, but the kids in the future might like it.

Year 9 student

It's useful to have an occasional humdrum English lesson.

Year 9 student

A teacher who can't get kids to weep or laugh over their study of English has missed the point.

School Principal

English is sort of, like ... sort of funny - it's sort of like life.

Student

It's to get better at what you already know about the language.

Student

Well, it's a subject in their school work, isn't it? Or is it the way they are speaking?

Parent

English is more or less like an option; it's a bit like speech and a bit like all the options.

Student

Students' thoughts, feelings, opinions and imaginings are the stuff of English.

Senior English teacher

THE STUDY

RESEARCH BASIS AND GENERAL APPROACH

Our study of a sample of high schools in West Australia was not a research study, but our theoretical starting points and our procedures drew on recent research into evaluation and into the methodology of case-study sampling.

THE SUBJECTIVE NATURE OF OBSERVATION AND INTERPRETATION

We assumed the subjective character of each person's interpretation of events. We therefore recognized that our own view of English, although unformulated at the time of our visits to schools, would largely determine how we construed the many lessons we saw and the many conversations we had. Similarly, the teachers and students would make individually varying interpretations of school events.

THE OBSERVER BECOMES PART OF THE EVENTS THAT HE IS OBSERVING

We assumed that the outcomes of the study would be influenced by the interaction between the observers and the school participants; therefore, to be fruitful, an *open* interaction needed to be established between all the parties concerned. So participation was voluntary at all levels, and all the information and views collected were at the disposal of those who provided them.

EVALUATION

Evaluation in case studies is no longer seen as a relatively simple matter of observing, judging and reporting. Recent studies in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia show three general directions:

- Issues may be selected either from the observers' field notes, or by consensus among the school participants and these are made the focus of an evaluative study by the observers.

- The observers attempt to capture and represent 'what it was like to be there', and do not attempt to identify issues, leaving the whole matter to the interpretation of the readers.

- Evaluation, through specific procedures, is seen as a mutually illuminating process for observers and observed. These procedures rest on openness, discussion between the people concerned, reflection, recognition of varying viewpoints, and judgements that are related to issues not individual behaviours.

Our study was a combination of (ii) and (iii) above. We left the schools to present their views of the teaching and learning of English in their own terms (Part II), and, from them, in Part III attempted to identify, on the one hand, the chief strengths and weaknesses, as we saw them, and on the other hand, those features in the school environment which most affected English.

A DIFFERENT METHODOLOGY FOR EXPLORING THE QUALITY OF EXPERIENCE AND THE MEANING OF BEHAVIOUR

While we owe a great deal to many workers in this field, (Simons 1977 and Ryan 1978) we drew particularly on four studies:

- Parlett and Hamilton's seminal article, *Evaluation As Illumination.* (1976)
- Case Studies in Science Evaluation. Programmes in 11 U.S. schools studied in depth. (Stake and Easley, 1978)
- The Ford Teaching Project carried out in Norwich in the U.K. (Elliott and Adelman, 1976?)
- The Ford Foundation Study of Openness in Education and Teachers' Understandings (Bussis, Chittenden and Amarel, 1976)

We owe a particular debt to the last of these. Bussis *et al.* suggest that case studies demand a different methodological paradigm from that most generally used in educational research. Such a paradigm would 'be based on an interactive notion of education and a view of persons other than that portrayed by behaviourism and technology... It would have to be as much concerned with the quality of experience and meaning of behaviour as with the occurrence of behaviour...' They suggest a number of strategies 'aimed at eliciting meaning and uncovering various qualities of experience, thought and production'.

Among the suggested strategies which we used were:

- An in-depth interview. This we modified to our purposes and used with the two teachers in each school who volunteered to work closely with us. A copy of the questions is printed in Appendix 3.
- The documentation of environments. We made such documentation a major feature of our part in the case studies.
- The analysis of work products. We made this - in conjunction with our documentation of the English department environment - the focus of our study of Special Innovation School No. 1.

To these strategies we added some documentation of how students, parents and teachers see the teaching and learning of English.

TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS: PERSONAL CONSTRUCTS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

An important theoretical starting-point for us was the notion of the power of 'personal constructs' in determining individual behaviours. (Kelly 1970) We assumed that teachers' personal constructs about education and about English would be of prime importance in determining what went on in English lessons. Our structured, in-depth interview was therefore designed to bridge the gap between what teachers actually do in lessons and what they would like to do, or believe they ought to do. It was essentially aimed at uncovering teachers' understandings of their own practice.

We were also able to develop in a few schools a process in which the teacher whose class we were going to visit reflected for five minutes (on tape) on what he was planning to do in the lesson and why, and what he hoped the outcomes might be. After the lesson he reflected again (on tape) about what had happened to his plans and expectations and where this might lead in subsequent lessons. We then interviewed and tape recorded three students from the class about their perceptions of what had been afoot, and discussed these with the teacher. This final discussion brought three different perceptions of the lesson together - the teacher's, the students' and the observer's - and thereby uncovered hitherto unperceived aspects of learning and teaching which were essentially evaluative but were arrived at mutually.

CONTEXT

Studies of speech over a number of years have revealed the effect of context (which includes audience) on performance, and our own London research on the development of writing abilities (Britton *et al.* 1975) threw up the powerful effect of contextual features of audience, purpose and task. Bernstein's work on classification and framing was an influential background study in our considerations of the effects of school organization (Bernstein 1975). These, and other studies, suggested that we might expect English to be particularly sensitive to the influence of contextual features, and we therefore paid particular attention to the environment for English in our design and in our field studies, a central aim being to identify the enabling features.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

INTENTIONS

To construct a picture of English teaching and learning in a sample of Government secondary schools in West Australia.

To identify and evaluate the chief influences on English teaching and learning within the school, the education system and the community.

To increase the awareness of the teachers we worked with by means of the writing we asked them to do for us, and by the interviews in which we discussed the project with them.

TIME

The time was limited to six months in the field with some preliminary work in England; the bulk of the writing was to be done after the survey was completed.

RESOURCES

One full-time worker (Nancy Martin)

Two assistants from the Curriculum and Research branches for two-fifths of their time (Marnie O'Neill and Phil Deschamp)

Secretarial and transcribing assistance from the Education Department, with some hired full-time help in the last two weeks.

OVERALL DESIGN

Part I — Leading statements about English in a historical context

Part II — Case studies of English in a small sample of schools

Part III — A critique of factors affecting English:

- As they emerged from the case studies
- As the observers perceived them in the light of the rationale for English presented in Part I.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A questionnaire was sent to all senior masters of English in Government secondary schools on the resources for English in their schools, together with an invitation to offer to co-operate in further work on the survey, i.e. the case study schools were to be selected from those who offered.

- Case studies of English teaching and learning in a small sample of schools.

  (The questionnaire was intended to indicate the resources for English, and the case studies to show what use was made of these resources).

- Preliminary interviews with people connected with education at all levels to provide information for a historical and forward perspective, for guidelines for the interviews in the sample schools, and as trials of the structured interviews for comparison of the predicted influences.

- Relevant published reports and school documents and programmes.

THE CASE STUDIES

A small sample was selected from those who offered; six for full study, and three to look at special innovations. Some ninety offered out of a possible one thousand two hundred and ninety.

A period - varying between three days and two weeks - of intensive observation, discussion and interviews in these schools.

This work in the schools drew on recent case-study research which recognizes that the observer-reporters affect the information they gain, and views the whole operation as a series of interactions.

The picture of English in the case study schools is presented by some of the teachers, students and parents as far as possible in their own words; the observers' notes of lessons were shown to the teachers before being used in the report; and the observers' summaries and links were intended to set the excerpts from interviews in context and be explanatory not evaluative.

THE SELECTION OF SCHOOLS

School variables

(1) Contrastive features which might affect the teaching and learning of English were predicted, and schools selected according to these. It was thought that these features, in one combination or another, would have a general applicability beyond the case study schools. Thus the observers' recommendations would be based on these general, contextual features affecting English, rather than on the work of particular schools. A measure of anonymity was necessary in a voluntary situation.

These contrastive features consisted of existing aspects of school organization and procedures in their West Australian context. They were

Location (country or metropolitan).

Socio-economic background.

Size.

Numbers of Aboriginal or non-English speaking migrant students.

The institutional and physical structure of the school.

The professional freedom and responsibility of the English teacher.

The beliefs and attitudes of the teachers concerned about education and about English.

The extent to which school-based curricula or externally mandated syllabuses and programmes operated in the school.

Relations with the local community.

(2) We selected the three special innovation schools in order to look at the effect on English of

A team of teachers from three secondary and seven primary schools in one town co-operating to develop talk and personal writing as a means of learning. The project was based on an education centre.

An integrated alternative course in Years 11 and 12 designed for drop-out students.

A new flexi-area high school embodying staff co-operation at all levels.

Influential features in the education system

In addition to these school variables we expected certain aspects of the functioning of the system as a whole to affect the teaching and learning of English to a greater or lesser degree in all the schools. The following features appeared as significant in all the preliminary interviews with education officers, teachers in schools and university teachers:

The examination system, past and present.

The B.S.E. comparability tests.

Assessments.

The promotion system for teachers.

The Education Department structures and institutions.

The Schools Commission.

The further education of teachers.

Kinds of information to be gathered in the sample schools

Taped interviews with the principals about socio-economic background, school philosophy and policy, the place of English and any special features.

Taped interviews with senior master(s) of English.

Notes of lessons visited by the observers.

A long (one hour or more) structured interview with each of the two teachers offering to work with the observers.

Interviews with small groups of students (2 or 3) from the classes visited.

Notes of discussions with teachers during the week about many aspects of English teaching.

Notes of visits to the library and discussions with librarians.

Notes on the reading by the observers of the total written work in English from the classes visited.

Interviews (taped or noted) with teachers and students engaged in special innovatory schemes, where they existed, e.g. cross-subject reading schemes, or mature students working in upper school classes.

Individual self-descriptions by many of the English teachers of their work and beliefs about English.

A consensus statement from the English department of a particular lesson, chosen by the teacher. These consisted of

A pre-lesson reflection on tape by the teacher.

The observers' notes of the lesson.

A discussion of these with the teacher.

A post-lesson reflection on tape from the teacher.

An interview with 3 students from the class.

An interactive discussion by the observer and the teacher about these items.

The interviews

The interviews were intended to be of various kinds:

The long, structured interview with the two teachers co-operating fully with us. The questions were designed to draw out the effect of the school variables, the influence of the system, and the teachers' 'operating constructs' about English.

Shorter interviews with small groups of students and parents in each school. A brief interview sheet was used by the interviewers as a guide, but it was not intended to determine the course of the interview.

Long (an hour or more) interviews with principals - and sometimes with deputy principals too - unstructured but directed towards drawing out similar, particular information.

Open discussions with the teachers whose lessons we observed. Both the lessons and our observations were discussed.

Ad hoc interviews with varied members of the school staff to broaden the case study according to the special directions of a particular school.

PROGRESSIVE RE-FOCUSING

The school variables were built into the design of the study in the selection of the sample schools and the predicted influential features of the system as a whole were included in the questions asked in the structured interviews. In addition to these, a procedure was adopted from case study research which assumed that one case study might alter the focus of the next. Review and reflection did, in fact, result in some change of focus. This was reflected in the interviews, other than the structured interview, and in the kind of observations made. For instance, one feature which emerged as the result of re-focusing was the significant effect on English of inter-personal relationships; another was the influence of the community around the school. Both of these had been expected to be of some importance, but re-focusing brought them up into high relief.

ANALYSIS

As it was gathered, the case study data was categorized according to the following focuses:

- To identify the most important influences on English teaching and learning as they were perceived in the case study schools.
- What the whole survey showed in the light of the rationale for English presented in Part I (positive and negative influences.)
- Implications for English classrooms.

PART I—THE BACKGROUND

RETROSPECT—CHANGES IN THE LAST TWENTY YEARS

Our attempt to survey English teaching and learning in the State secondary schools needs to be seen against a background of extremely rapid change - change that sets the scene for transforming secondary education in Western Australia. However, a decade, or half a generation perhaps, is needed before the effects of powerful administrative changes begin to be widespread. To illustrate: perhaps the most crying need is for teachers to become truly professional. This means having and using professional freedom and taking responsibility for their work and its outcomes. Yet, the 'efficiency' mark given to teachers - and not just new teachers - by visiting superintendents was dropped only in 1970. It was hard for teachers to feel truly responsible for their own standards and directions when they had to wait on an external judgement on which their promotion depended.

Teachers graduating since 1970 have not had to unlearn old attitudes, and are therefore more able to use their initiative and responsibility through school-based curricula and the activities of professional associations like the English Teachers' Association.

In the early 1960s provision for education for all beyond the age of fifteen was begun through the establishment of many new high schools, for which competitive entry was not necessary. But a stroke of the pen is only a beginning; the next step was the appointment of superintendents in various subjects. Miss N. Richards and Mr R.E. Biggins were appointed superintendents of English. Mr Biggins writes of the English scene in 1964 as follows:

> The teaching situation did little to encourage enterprise or imagination or to provide for communication of ideas among teachers. The chief reasons for this were
>
> - The competitive assessment and promotion scheme encouraged the teacher to keep his ideas to himself in the hope of getting ahead of the next man. (Women hardly came into it at this date.)
> - There were two public exams (the Junior at Year 10 and the Leaving at Year 12) with narrow and largely unchanging syllabuses. (The Junior was phased out in 1971.)
> - Student teachers, immediately on entering teachers' colleges, were sent to their own or similar schools for teaching observation or practice. They imitated the teaching of their own teachers, and returned to schools similar to those in which they had been taught. Thus there was little change from one generation to the next. This was reinforced by the youth of the teachers and the shortness of their course. (The two-year course was extended to three in 1968.)
> - English was not seen as much of a subject. The importance of language and literature in the total education of the student was not generally appreciated. The view that 'anyone can teach English' was widespread among principals and administrators.

  - There was a strong belief in the idea that one person was as good as another, so the new senior masters of English did not at first see themselves as responsible for advising young teachers or developing policies for the teaching of English.

Mr Biggins remembers that the role of the new superintendents was both inspectorial and advisory, but they were burdened with administrative duties and had little time for the much-needed advisory work with teachers, either individually or in groups. There was no systematic dissemination of ideas. An advisory teacher in English for district high schools was appointed in 1973. Advisors for primary schools were appointed on a regional basis in 1978. No itinerant advisory teachers in English are available to the high and senior high schools, although teachers may consult curriculum and advisory teachers of the Curriculum Branch in Perth.

Mr Biggins saw the needs of the situation in 1964 as primarily helping teachers and parents to develop attitudes which would allow them to use the administrative changes. These attitudes were to do with

- Confidence in teachers, a belief in themselves and the importance of their work, and interest in the ideas of other teachers.

- Growth of professional standards and a belief in Government education.

- The place of English, especially literature in education.

- The place of public examinations, and a growing reliance on teachers' assessments.

DEVELOPMENTS, 1964-1974

(1) The superintendents set out to gather ideas from their own teachers and from abroad, and to disseminate them systematically through in-service courses. The wide scatter of schools and great distances made this a formidable undertaking. From 1964 onwards, the expectation built up that English teachers could attend at least one in the year. Concurrently, annual conferences for senior masters of English were arranged, and later, courses for specialist teachers - drama, remedial work, film-making.

During this period Mr Biggins noted two significant changes in attitude:

  - A growth of confidence in individual ways of doing things - a sense that a person 'teaches best when he is most himself'.
  - The growth of 'a recognized and respected identity as teachers of English'.

The establishment of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (1964) contributed to these changing attitudes.

(2) Administrative developments gave practical scope to the superintendents' efforts.

  - Allocation of Departmental funds for books, tape recorders, cameras and other equipment.
  - Establishment of a curriculum branch to advise teachers on buying books, to provide reading lists and to write guidelines for organizing courses.

- Appointment of advisory teachers.
- Modification of school timetables to free teachers for a weekly subject meeting.
- Co-operation between English staffs of Government, independent and Catholic schools.
- Provision (at least in principle) for remedial teachers in all secondary schools.
- Setting up the School of the Air and the itinerant teacher service.

(3) Three developments occurred which profoundly affected the directions of whole schools:

- The Commonwealth provided generous funds for building and equipping of libraries in all schools. These buildings have tended to become resource centres and centres for all kinds of activity and for display of student writing and art work.

- In 1969 an attempt was made to reform the examination system. The Junior Certificate was abolished (1971) and the Board of Secondary Education was established to award certificates of achievement at the end of Years 10 and 12. Syllabuses were revised and in Years 8-10 assessment passed over to the individual schools, with the help of an external moderator in each subject. (See Assessment, Grading and Examinations for further detail.)

- From 1970 on, some of the large new schools were built on a faculty design, locating teaching-rooms, staff-room, office and store-room for each subject area together. This allowed for joint planning and review, workshop-style teaching, display material and student work, and on-going projects. The change in architecture reflected the growing expertise and professionalism of teachers, although it fostered the strength and coherence of subject departments at the expense of the whole school ethos. This change in school design catered for a particular stage in the development of education in Western Australia and pre-supposed other designs in the future. (See Special Innovation School No. 3.)

(4) Aboriginal Education Branch. One of the results of the 1967 referendum was the increased Commonwealth Government involvement in Aboriginal affairs within the States. From an educational point of view Canberra sought to assist States to eliminate disadvantages suffered by Aboriginal children, to increase the 'Aboriginality' of school programmes and to involve Aborigines in the teaching/learning processes.

Largely because of this involvement, the Aboriginal Education Branch was established within the States Education Department in 1973.

The Branch now assists schools and students through a wide range of resources and services, such as those listed below:

- Co-ordination and co-operation with other educational and community agencies.
- Advisory, liaison and resource personnel, and Aboriginal teachers' aides and traditional 'teachers'.
- Pre-service and in-service teacher education and teachers' aide training.
- Financial support for regional in-service courses, and special school projects.

- Resource and stimulus materials.
- Development of special courses and programmes more suited to Aboriginal students.

It is a truism that administrative changes alone cannot give quality in education. A system is only as good as its teachers, and people's attitudes are deeply rooted in custom and experience and are slow to understand the potential of administrative changes such as these. Classroom actuality often lags behind. But what is outstanding in looking at the situation in 1964, as described by Mr Biggins, is the speed of the changes in the short span of the ten years he surveys.

PROSPECT—THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL LOOKS FORWARD

English, like other aspects of the curriculum, is affected by the development of education as a whole. This study is as much about the contexts for work in English as it is about what goes on in English lessons; and to understand the changes that are happening in English teaching, it is important to be aware how such changes relate to broader perspectives, past and future. To provide a forward look we asked the Director-General of Education, Dr Mossenson to talk about his hopes for the future and to try to identify the growing points in education in Western Australia.

GROWING-POINTS

School and community

He began by saying that the question of school and community - school and parent relationships - is a matter of growing concern. Western Australia is not all that far from being a pioneering community in many respects and this has meant that parents have tended to leave schools to those responsible for running them. 'While that's been easy and comfortable from some points of view, it's possibly not the best thing.' More and more people want to be in on the educational issue and this, he thought, was a step in the right direction, but as yet the relations between a school and its local community were mostly seen in terms of community use of school buildings or in discussions about parents' share in various decisions affecting what went on in the school. He would like to see a much more organic working relationship emerge.

Firstly, he would like to see a school as an institution which caters virtually for all age groups - that is, one which is part of the community facility for old and young as well as for the student group. 'I would like', he said, 'to see adults coming back to school ... sitting and doing examinable courses or polishing up on old skills ... I like the idea of school programmes being built around doing things in local institutions with local kindergartens or with older citizens, and I'd like many of these groups to be brought into the school. For instance I think a lot of the Home Economics would have a bit more point if geared, say, to entertaining some of the older people around.

Secondly, I would like to see the idea that only teachers teach superseded by one in which the full-time professional teachers are reinforced by people from the community coming in and doing things in the school. I think there are many people in a community who could make a significant contribution to the educational experiences of the children. I'd like to see these two directions develop. It's not just that the community is getting fuller value out of the school. I think the children in the primary school and the adolescents in the secondary school would have a better education as such. I think the children benefit by having old people and quite young people and young mothers in and around as part of the normal operation of the school. In other words, the schools will cease to be places where the only adults are the teachers of the children.' (For some aspects of this growing-point see Case Study No. 6.)

Regionalization

The centralized pattern of education is a natural product of the geography and demography of Western Australian society, but some things are changing which suggest some measure of decentralization. Such changes as the increasing public and community interest in education; the better education of teachers; the rapid growth of Perth to a city of about a million, with all that implies in terms of educational provision; the increased numbers of adolescents staying on in school and what that implies in terms of particular needs - all these things suggest not the devolution of authority and decision-making in the fullest sense, but some decentralizing through regional forms of organization. 'We're now locating more and more professional staff in the regions, and this means that superintendents leading a region know the schools, and they can be real education leaders ... They can decide what are the strengths and deficiencies of their schools and what sort of things their community might want or might need.'

Dr Mossenson then went on to outline the particular areas of education where regional knowledge and initiative would be specially valuable.

- 'It could make staffing a little more personalized than it has been.' Firstly, regional superintendents, knowing their schools, will let the central authority know what their needs are before the staffing allocations are made; and secondly, when the lists have been made, copies will go to the regional superintendents, who will make adjustments to suit their schools and teachers.

- 'It means that we've got committees which handle the funding and direction of in-service programmes, so the special needs of particular schools and localities will be where in-service work begins. This is already happening in some areas, and the result has been an increased demand for it.' (See Case Study No. 3 and Special Innovation School No. 3.)

- 'Similarly with funding for minor works programmes.' Money is now allocated to the regional offices to be spent at the discretion of the regional superintendents. They invite proposals from their schools and decide how the money shall be split up. 'It's important to a school to get these things done quickly and it becomes a bugbear if you've got to go through a whole central rigmarole with the Public Works Department.'

- 'Then there is advisory work in the regions. The regional superintendent concludes he wants advisory work in junior primary, or spoken English, or art, for instance, and we then ask him to see if he can locate one of his teachers who lives in the region and is prepared to travel around.' It might be necessary to add somebody to the staff of a school to make it possible for the advisory work to be done by someone who is already part-time in a school. He added that regionalization should help to overcome some

> of the problems of rural education where distance and isolation had meant short measure in many things.

While Dr Mossenson was clear about the strengths and possibilities of this development from the regions, with all that that means in terms of local initiative and local needs, he also stressed the importance of continuous contact with the centre. 'We don't want the district superintendents to be divorced from some of the related thinking that's going on.' The problems of distance and isolation are so great that old ways could hang on longer than they should, so it is planned that regional officers should spend time regularly at the Curriculum Branch to keep in touch.

The evolution of school policies and philosophies

'I would like to think that the development of an ethos for the school was a feature of schools generally, though I think I would be flattering our system by saying that; but I think it would be fair to say that there has been Departmental encouragement and pushing for this ... and I think that more of our schools, primary and secondary, have a school policy and a school philosophy, or they're attempting this.' He went on to comment on the establishment of some special secondary schools in which the architectural and educational briefs, and modifications to the general pattern of staff appointments, were designed to promote the development of a conscious school philosophy and the participation of staff in this.

He said that the faculty schools represented the high-water mark in terms of secondary education which was essentially subject based - an agglomeration of disciplines and departments. 'But', he added, 'the worry is that it still leaves underestimated the other very vital part of a high school - that is, pupil development, or the pastoral aspects of the worries of adolescents and as I see it, these special schools are an attempt at restoring some balance.' He thought it would be a mistake to regard these special schools as unique; it was more that the development of a corporate philosophy and policy was built into their design - a development intended to cover pastoral as well as academic aspects of education. There was, however, a general set towards such things through the Department's emphasis on evaluation and self-evaluation, on school-based curriculum and on staff involvement in policy-making.

The development of fully comprehensive education

Dr Mossenson then spoke about the extent to which education was and was not fully comprehensive. He said, 'We talked about being comprehensive from about 1960 onwards. Now for several years we weren't that at all. We were really multi-lateral because we had a commercial stream and a professional stream and so on. The Achievement Certificate had the effect of breaking the multi-lateral business and taking us a big step forward towards thoroughgoing comprehensiveness; but it did it only in the lower school ... By no stretch of the imagination could you say that our schools are comprehensive right through into Years 11 and 12, because essentially they are academically oriented schools. What do we do with kids who can't handle matriculation? ... You can't say you're catering for the whole age-group of sixteen and seventeen year olds.' He went on to say that he thought the solution to this problem was in the development of alternative courses which would carry certification, and of options for special interests of Year 11 students - courses which reflected individual interests and a wider range of subjects, electronics, motor transport, agricultural science, for instance. Other courses that were beginning, he said, were centred on the re-socialization of drop-out students.

Schools would need to extend beyond their traditional academic courses in Years 11 and 12 if comprehensive education in the upper school was to become a reality. (See Case Study No. 6 and Special Innovation School No. 2.)

The need for high standards

In the context of developing full comprehensive education, he felt impelled to utter a warning, especially to secondary schools. He said, 'Whereas primary and perhaps even pre-primary schools have a critical role to play with regard to standards of literacy and numeracy, that doesn't mean the secondary school just takes finished products and has no responsibilities.' He thought the secondary schools had two areas of responsibility-firstly, to continue that which is mainly a primary thing with a real role in the remedial build-up; and secondly, to see that increased pressure on social issues did not detract from the general standard of the whole age group as it goes through to the top of the school. The pursuit of excellence was always important. It was not so long since only the brightest students got an adequate education, and in righting the balance - which was what comprehensive education was all about - it was important the pendulum didn't swing too far. He was concerned that quality of work was emphasized in teacher training institutions and in the upper secondary school. High-quality performance for those who were capable of it should be an inescapable aim in education.

The Achievement Certificate and comparability tests

He thought the effects of the new systems of testing had run away from the aims. He said, 'I was very much involved with these confounded things from the beginning ... I regard the Achievement Certificate as having been a progressive and worthwhile development when it occurred, and its purpose was to get a genuine comprehensive pattern going ... It meant that youngsters could choose all subjects across the board, and it meant that, while we're not going to teach all kids, say, English and mathematics, we're not going to expect all of them to come out with similar results. So it *was* a progressive thing. But it's become formalized and its own mad momentum just continues. Comparability tests, meetings with moderators - the whole paraphernalia which was necessary to satisfy a doubting public and to allay the fears of employers ten years ago now just continues because everybody loves it. But there's no need for a whole lot of it.'

With regard especially to the comparability tests, he said, 'They were brought in specifically when we were moving into a cross-setting procedure, so that youngsters might work at an advanced level in one subject and at a less advanced level in another.' It was the purpose of the comparability tests to re-establish norms for the State overall. The normal distribution was never intended to apply in individual schools. The percentages of most able and least able students in the various schools were intended to assist teachers - not to strait-jacket them. He said his guess would be that 'in the minds of some people - and in the hands of some people - the whole exercise is more mechanistic than it should be. I'm disappointed, because if there was a justification of something mechanistic about the operation in the early stages, I would think that justification has long since disappeared.' He went on to express concern that school-based assessment seemed to be dominated by timetable arrangements. This meant the disappearance of essay-type testing because short-answer tests fitted more conveniently into forty-minute timetable periods.

He thought that some subjects did not consist of a hundred little topics, each mastered on its own, but rather demanded a more comprehensive view only adequately tested in essay-type answers. To lose this was to lose the educational element in testing. This change in the type of testing was falsely associated with the Achievement Certificate.

His final comment was that with the great wealth of in-service work going on he couldn't understand why there had to be the same patterns and the same conservative decisions as when the scheme originated and everybody was just starting in it.

THREE CURRENT ISSUES

THE DEBATE ABOUT STANDARDS - LITERACY IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

In times of threat people look around them with anxiety and sometimes suspicion. The shadow of doubt can fall anywhere. In times of economic threat like the present, it falls quickly on education, which consumes an increasing amount of the national budget, yet cannot, in any real sense, be measured. The threatening skies are certainly not a local phenomenon, and belong at least to the whole Western world. Parents find it hard to know what goes on in schools, but it is relatively easy to know if their children are learning to read and spell. It is not surprising, therefore, that people are most vocal about these two aspects of literacy. Couple this with the fact that young people earn more money than ever before, and that in contemporary Western societies they are allowed more freedom, and it becomes understandable that anxiety is translated into demands for more discipline in the schools.

This anxiety is fanned by the media, which tend to give education a bad press. Mistakes and failures are news; steady progress is not sufficiently spectacular. But it would be unprofessional to attend only to such specific and *ad hoc* public issues and dangerous to try to put the clock back. We agree with James Britton (Britton,J.,1978) that

> '... enlightened education is not part of any bandwagon, or fashion cycle, or pendulum swing; it is a slowly growing movement with philosophical roots way back in the past, and pragmatic roots deep in the intuitive wisdom of the most successful teachers today.
>
> It has not been tried and found wanting; as the Bullock Committee Survey was able to indicate, it has yet barely achieved a foothold in the schools of this country (Britain). I doubt whether there was ever a time when it was more important, or more difficult, than it is today to keep these ideas alive.'

Nevertheless, anxieties about standards, even when expressed in vague or trivial terms, should be interpreted as a warning to take a good hard look at the way literacy is being developed in the secondary schools in relation to the increasing demands. It is also a warning that schools are not islands unto themselves. They are part of the community and need to see their educational role as extending as much to adults in the community as to their students. How otherwise can parents (and others) share the teachers' long-term goals relating to values and attitudes as well as the practical aims of good achievement certificates? Education needs to be more of a joint enterprise.

The debate about standards of literacy has two questions to ask:

> Have the standards of school performance fallen?
>
> Are the standards rising to meet new demands; and what is the nature of these new demands?

Have standards of literacy fallen?

In *Australian Studies of School Performance* (Australian Council for Educational Research, 1977) information based on an Australia-wide survey is given about the various levels of performance at ten and fourteen years. It is not possible to say whether this is more or less than students of the same age were capable of ten or twenty years ago because changes in population with a steady in-flow of non-English speaking immigrants make comparison impossible. But it is possible to do what ACER has done and indicate what children in a given year are capable of. This information is available, and a study of it suggests that standards have not fallen.

There is also other evidence. The number of students staying on in secondary schools after Year 10 rose sharply in the 18 years between 1954 and 1972 as the following table shows:

Retention Rates in Percentages

Year 7 Population in W.A. Government Schools	Staying to Year 11	Staying to Year 12
1954 : 7 875 students	12·7	11·1
1963 : 12 862 students	25·2	18·4
1972 : 17 348 students	46·1	28·3

A similar pattern of increases shows in the figures for tertiary enrolment. Some of this increase may be accounted for by the growth in immigrant population during these years but it also represents a trend towards a longer period of education objectively reflected in achievement certificates at a higher level.

Are standards of literacy rising to meet new demands, and what is the nature of these demands?

There is some evidence that secondary schools are at a point of change with regard particularly to reading and writing.

It used to be assumed that when students came into high school they were literate. This has never been true but was ignored because the main thrust of secondary education was towards the students for whom the high school was a natural milieu and who would go on to tertiary institutions. It was accepted that the rest would make only moderate progress and would leave at fifteen to go to work where their success (or survival) depended more on practical skills. Thus teachers in high schools did not see themselves as having much part to play in developing literacy. Their job was their subjects.

To some extent this is still true; changing needs are perceived slowly, and the problem is enlarged by the West Australian system of promotion. One principal held strong views about this. He said:

> *You take younger teachers in secondary school; they must teach upper school, and they must get as much as they can in their first six or seven years if they're looking for promotion to senior master. When it comes to selection, if you want to be a senior master, it's no use expecting to get the job if you tell them you've concentrated on the lower ability kids in lower school. Unless you can get up there and tell the tribunal that you have organized upper-school English, history and economics you won't get the job. I think this is a very bad feature...*

But some of the attitudes and activities of secondary schools are beginning to change.

Firstly, with regard to the students who enter high school barely able to read or write, there is now some provision in all schools for a teacher with special responsibility for the barely literate and slow-learning students. But this is still only a beginning. There is not yet a sense throughout the schools and the community of the importance of trying to make every student literate and of the need *for individual help.* There is still a feeling that things can be left to the remedial teacher; and remedial teachers will tell you that they don't get the time with individual students to make much difference. More provision is needed - and a re-think about ways of using it - if children at this level of illiteracy are to learn to read and write.

Secondly, with regard to the students who enter high school able to read and write at an appropriate level for their age, some very significant changes are happening. Since 1974 the Education Department has initiated in-service courses to draw all teachers - of all subjects - into the debate about literacy, and the picture has changed in a number of schools as the teachers - and in W.A. particularly science teachers - have begun to take responsibility for extending reading and writing. In this context, findings from a recent research study in Britain are highly relevant, although there may be some differences in the Australian scene.

Professor Lunzer and his team, inquiring into the effective use of reading, found among other things the following:

- By comparison with listening and writing, reading is seldom a significant classroom activity, and with some exceptions in English, teachers seldom rely on reading as a vehicle for learning.

- Where it *is* evident, classroom reading is very fragmentary. Short bursts of reading lasting between one and fifteen seconds account for more than fifty per cent of the reading across all subjects (e.g. reading worksheet questions, reading notes for copying, scanning back over writing). Such reading is often used as a classroom control.

- Reading is a very low-status activity in secondary schools. Teachers are apologetic if classes are 'caught' reading continuously; reading periods are synonomous with 'free' periods in pupils' minds.

- Reading in the classroom is rarely reflective. The pupils observed were not undertaking reading tasks which demanded being handled in reflective terms with some personal involvement. Therefore, since in the team's view reflective reading is a *pre-condition* of comprehension, learners were not being systematically helped towards the development of greater understanding.

The team also undertook a readability survey in the four 'core' areas in first-aid and fourth-year classes in Nottingham secondary schools. This revealed, among other things, that 'in the first year groups a high proportion of the reading material, particularly in science and social studies, had a reading level two years in advance of the pupils' chronological age. Therefore a large number of *average* pupils were reading at frustration level in these areas.' They conclude that 'since the capacity and quality of any readers' reflective response will vary considerably from one reading situation to another, the team endorses the Bullock Report recommendation that reading should be taught within the context of different subject areas.'

One of the problems for educationalists is to know more exactly what the demands are that school leavers are said to be unable to meet. One pilot inquiry in the West Midlands in Britain made a start with a local survey of the oral and written communication that takes place in industry and commerce and the public service. (Coventry Education Authority, 1979.) Some 25 per cent of the boys took up engineering apprenticeships. It was found that engineering demanded more reading than was anticipated, including sophisticated training manuals, the complex technical instructions of the job cards, and regulations and leaflets dealing with legal requirements. Clerical and retail staff had to absorb a considerable amount of written information, and many jobs demanded the ability to use reference systems involving indexing and information retrieval.

The demands of writing, apart from the training period for engineering apprentices, were much less, but what there was demanded accuracy, legibility, brevity and conciseness, and correct spelling, particularly of technical terms. Later on, the extent and variety of writing increased with responsibility, and at these higher levels included technical reports, memoranda, minutes, letters and instructions. The ability to write these items was needed for quite modest promotion.

The need for effective oral communication was apparent in the day-to-day work and social contacts, in contributions to technical discussions, and for committee work.

What seems to stand out in this inquiry are two kinds of demand - a demand for specific training in communication skills belonging to different occupations; and a demand for a higher educational level involving, particularly, the ability to read and discuss. Yet schools cannot provide skills specific to the future needs of many different occupations; such skills belong to the field of vocational training carried out in industry or in technical and further education colleges. Nevertheless, there are things that schools are doing which relate in a general way to students' future work, one of which is the development of alternative courses. These and other directions are reported in some of the case studies.

What are the language demands for the most able students in the school populations - those who stay on till the end of Year 12? These students have always been under pressure to specialize in order to compete for tertiary places, so it has always been hard for them to shift their gaze from their required syllabuses; and many university spokesmen hold that the standard of work in universities could not be maintained without this specialist focusing in the upper school. Complaints have generally been about the levels of writing and reading, yet the capacity to read reflectively and to articulate ideas in speech and writing depend upon the *experience* of reading and writing - upon encounters with 'models', and particularly of 'models' of many different kinds. Perception of what an essay or report is like is sharper when it is seen against a background of other forms of writing and a wide spectrum of ideas. It is here that W.A. students are potentially fortunate. The current TAE regulations make English (or English Literature) a compulsory subject; and in English; apart from preparing students for the comprehension and essay questions, the scope for English is wide open. Some schools are using this opportunity to increase the range of their students' reading and of the kinds of writing they do. (See, for instance, the work in English described in Special Innovation School No. 1.) Moreover, the Education Department is fostering this development by its in-service work on school-based curricula.

Part of the *Effective Use of Reading* research was concerned with the nature of reading comprehension. The team found no evidence that the comprehension process involves a hierarchy of skills, and that some learners possess 'lower order' but not 'higher order' skills. Rather they conclude that comprehension is a 'unitary competence', and that reading performance ultimately rests upon the existence of certain key conditions within the reader himself. These are

- The willingness and opportunity to reflect upon what is being read.

- Motivation, interest and involvement in the reading task.

It may seem like trumpeting the obvious to suggest that students' interest and involvement and their willingness to take up the school tasks - such as reading and writing - are related to the ethos of the school and to the professional level and attitudes of the staff, but this is what has emerged from that still rare kind of research - a *longitudinal* study, in this case of twelve London comprehensive schools. (Rutter *et al.,* 1979.)

The results of this four-year complex statistical study suggest (among other things) that behaviour and learning are to do with the way a school functions as a social organization. The research team looked at four measurable features - attendance, good behaviour, exam results and delinquency. One of their main findings was

'The differences between schools in outcome *were* systematically related to their characteristics as social institutions. Factors as varied as the degree of academic emphasis, teacher actions in lessons, the availability of incentives and rewards, good conditions for pupils and the extent to which children were able to take responsibility were all significantly associated with outcome differences between schools. All of these factors were open to modification by the staff, rather than fixed by external restraints.'

This suggests that improving literacy levels everywhere in the school should not be seen as a series of isolated processes; it should rather be seen as being related to all the uses of language, and as being much affected by the things that happen between the lessons as well as in them.

THE QUALITY OF ENGLISH TEACHING - TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Any discussion about quality of teaching must be tentative. What is meant by 'quality' shifts according to who is speaking? Is it the observer's view, or the teacher's, or the students', or colleagues'? All these will have their value judgements about teaching, which will be embedded in their various life histories. While acknowledging that these are all elements in a discussion about quality in teaching, we want to suggest that the heart of the matter resides in each teacher's judgement of himself.

How a teacher teaches is rooted deep in his personal history. Being concerned with children, and authority, and friendship - even love - his behaviour has powerful links with his own childhood, with his own authority figures and his emotional attitudes to these. This is true also of parents - who also are 'teachers'. It is each individual's inner system of understandings, beliefs and values that determines what teachers and parents do in their mutual task of educating children. Some of these 'constructs' (beliefs and values) are implicit and unrecognized and therefore resistant to change; others are explicit and within the play of critical thinking, of the influence of other people. Perhaps, therefore, we should start this discussion of quality in teaching by suggesting that it is related to a teacher being willing to reflect on what is really important to him in his work, and why.

We found many teachers willing to reflect in this way when time and an interested listener were created by our visits to schools, and we quote from one of many such interviews in illustration:

Teacher: *When I first started teaching I wouldn't have taken anything from the kids. It was all give, because I thought I had it all. But that's just part of survival and I realize now that the only way they're going to accept anything from me anyway is if it's an exchange.*

Interviewer: *That's a pretty good lesson.*

Teacher: *Well, it is, but I mean I've really only learned that through my social contact with the kids and their parents ... after a while you begin to realize - if you put English lessons into their perspective a bit - I mean if I came into the school thinking I was going to make every kid a perfect reader and every kid a perfect writer and English lessons were to be the be-all and end-all for me, for the student it's just another little thing on their timetable. When you see them at sport, you see them in their home, at the church or the youth club or whatever else it is, you begin to realize school isn't everything to those kids and English lessons are only a little bit.*

Many teachers told us that they found their long interviews valuable because it caused them to think about their work in a way they hadn't done before. Important though such reflection is, it is too rare and too random to have the effect on the quality of teaching that it could have if it were seen as a necessary part of *action* - a part of teaching itself, which it has become for a teacher who wrote:

'My education, school, colleges, marriage, children and all the rest have left me with these:

- To care about thinking, which gives shape and purpose to my living; to try to think tentatively, and to be able to say honestly to myself and others, *I don't know*.

- To try to keep in mind that the ideas, beliefs and values that I hold have to engage with action. If and when they don't, I must modify, or perhaps scrap them. *I can change my mind* and say *I was wrong*.

- To care about the dreams of others; and to recognize that the conversations between us, in print or in speech, are the means of developing the self.

  I need my friends and *I need to care about them.*

  I covet these for my students. (Gill and Crocker, 1977)

Next, perhaps, we ought to consider the nature of 'the exchange' referred to above by the young teacher who discovered it to be a crucial part of his becoming (by his own judgement) a better teacher. It is helpful to remember that learning happens in face-to-face encounters. All the planning and programmes and discussion with colleagues are, in a sense, preliminaries to the encounters and conversations of the classroom. For English, the plans cannot predict or determine more than a general direction, or if they do, things will be going wrong. What happens in the face-to-face encounters is the result of intuitive judgements and experience backed by a general sense of what you want to happen. When you are face-to-face with a person you can read many signs that belong specifically to this moment and this place, and you act, or speak, in accordance with this information. Anyone working too closely to a programme or a plan can lose this minute-by-minute intuitional knowledge which we might call 'response' - or exchange. The chief channel for this mutual communication is conversation between individuals.

Some educational contexts exclude mutual response, and in others it is a major factor.

A teacher epitomized these opposing circumstances and his feelings about them:

> *I suppose the thing that makes you want to be a teacher in the first place is the interaction with the kids. When I talked about the constraints of the classroom, the thing that tires me is the constant drilling of lower school students line up, in we go, keep quiet, sit down, stand up. That's the thing that, after two and half years, is grinding, and if I have a day where I have to do a lot of that sort of thing, I do start to think I'll go and do something else. If I had my way, what I would like to do is take forty students on a world tour with me for two years. You see what I mean? I took forty odd away in the holidays and we learnt so much ...*

We would think that response is an important part of quality of English teaching.

There is also for an English teacher another context for the word 'response'. Much of our work includes works of imagination that we read and talk about with our students. These may be chosen by us or by someone else, but surely what we do with literature inside school must be related to our ongoing reading (and watching) for our own individual satisfaction. We may call it aesthetic response, but however it is described, it is an active response to works of imagination - music, visual arts or literature

- and it is irrespective of whether these have anything to do with any pedagogical aims. We are our 'own men and women' in respect of what we read (or watch) and what we are moved by. Yet, this reading for personal satisfaction will be a continuing resource for what we bring to our classes. Sometimes it will be particular items from our reading that we want to share with our students; often there may be no direct link, but throughout our classroom encounters we shall be creating an awareness that there is pleasure in reading, and if not everyone shares it, there can at least be *respect* for different sources of satisfaction.

So we need to trust our judgements - about people and about books, and accord a similar respect to others, colleagues *and* students - 'to care about the dreams of others'. In practical terms this means professional freedom, i.e. professional responsibility. Again and again teachers said in our structured interviews that what they valued above all was professional freedom. One reply epitomizes them all:

> *Freedom of choice, freedom to use the curriculum, but definitely freedom of choice of the material and the way that I would like to use it - the areas I would like to cover. I would not like to have, as we did in the past, one period of this, one period of grammar, one period of written expression, one period of comprehension, as when I first came back to the school. There was the set amount. My poems were even chosen for me. So were the stories I had to read. I hated that.*

The alternative to this humiliating 'ordering' of a colleague's professional work is the free exchange of ideas, plans and problems. Such an exchange provides the necessary checks and affirmations of individual judgements. They do not erode his professional responsibility and freedom at all. Rather they add to it.

Owing to changes in the West Australian education system over the last fifteen years (see 'Retrospect' above) the time is now ripe for teacher development in ways that could profoundly affect the quality of teaching. The growth of professional freedom implies far-reaching changes in the pattern of responsibility in the system as a whole, yet teacher development now depends on it. Clearly we are not talking about the anarchy of totally independent and isolated teaching. We are suggesting that the growth of professional responsibility rests on specific conditions, which also need time to grow.

What might these conditions be?

> Collaboration at all levels, in the school, in the locality and in subject associations.
>
> Professional up-dating.
>
> Co-operation with those other educators - parents and the public.
>
> Initial education of teachers needs to be more sensitively related to changing needs of society.

If our analysis is correct of the directions in which English is moving (see 'What is English?' below) we can see that events have far outrun the initial preparation given by CAEs and universities, though some are beginning to re-shape their courses. Therefore teachers must look to in-service education to fill the gaps, though this task is additional to its real function. *Its real function is teacher development in the context of ongoing work.* And in-service education has some specially appropriate features which initial training cannot have. It is flexible; courses may be long or short; they may take all sorts of forms; and above all they may be initiated and organized by teachers themselves.

Before professional freedom can fully work in releasing the intellectual and creative abilities of teachers there needs to be universal recognition that professional up-dating (and all that that implies) is an integral part of every teacher's work. Distance and isolation pose enormous problems in West Australia, and have contributed to a *laissez faire* belief that contact with new ideas and knowledge may not be necessary - that what was learned in initial training can be made do with. But changes in society are forcing the pace.

Let us look first at what teachers themselves say about their greatest needs. In the 1977 submissions to the Curriculum Development Centre (NCET) three areas of need are repeatedly declared. These are concerned with

- Migrant and Aboriginal education.
- The teaching of reading, particularly in secondary schools.
- The whole language development process, including the structure, organization and functions of language itself. In connection with language development, teachers wanted help in how to get language policies going in their schools, and help with specific and immediate problems such as how to reconcile the value of students' own language with pressure to step up technical skills.

There were other needs expressed but these dominated the submissions. It seems to us that each of these goes back to an underlying need for knowledge about language, its nature and its place in individual growth, which in effect involves such questions as

- How does language work for us in learning? And in behaving generally?
- How does it change as we grow? And how does it change in different situations?
- What are the conditions in which it grows? What are the periods of greatest growth?
- How much can a teacher affect this growth - nourish it or stunt it?
- What are the special needs of migrant and Aboriginal students? Do they need more drills or more experience of language use?
- How can reading and writing be taught so that the strategies of teaching will be 'true to language as it actually functions'? (See 'What is English?')
- How is the written language different from the spoken? What kinds of 'rules' of use are appropriate in each?
- When is standard English necessary?

And many more.

The question is, how far can in-service education meet this need?

In the long run, we think CAEs and universities should (and will) re-shape their courses for teachers to include this kind of knowledge, though we agree with Douglas Barnes (and others) that a course in general linguistics is not what is needed (Gill and Crocker, 1977), but something both more general in application and more specific to classroom situations. Very few such courses exist, and it may be that in-service education with its flexibility and practical roots may be able to develop the kind of courses that are needed. A humble, grass-roots way of beginning might be to start by collaborative consultative occasions between teachers and people with linguistic expertise. They would work together in defining the areas of knowledge that would help them, and then, by using classroom data such as tape recordings and written work, build up conclusions from these field studies - essentially a workshop beginning, *ad hoc*, from particular problems, and moving later towards a more coherent approach.

The suggestion for this kind of procedure for meeting the immediate needs of teachers of English arises in part from the submissions to CDC, where those who commented on teacher development thought *how it was done* was a matter of prime importance. There were three intertwined themes concerned with both the content and the context of in-service work. In as far as they are separable, one stressed the need for school-based workshops in a local school, for local teachers; one was concerned with a school staff collaborating to work out a total school language curriculum; and the third was concerned with developing a school-based curriculum for English. What they all had in common was the notion that *all* teachers in a school needed to collaborate in the matter of developing language, and it was this that (necessarily) put the focus on *local* work. Furthermore, they expressed their belief that they needed to draw in parents and other interested local people to their plans for language development in their particular schools.

What these submissions said was reinforced from some of our case-study schools. The principal of one school told us he felt that teachers' initiative in developing their own in-service work locally was more fruitful than attendance at courses given by the Education Department, which drew in teachers from a wide area. He thought, on the one hand, that teachers knew what they wanted and that these needs were related to the schools they worked in; on the other hand, he thought that the fact that they took the initiative was a step towards a greater professionalism.

The principal was talking in the context of the courses and meetings arranged by the regional committees of the Schools Commission. Since 1976 (through the State Commmittee) the Schools Commission has provided funds to enable teachers to plan and conduct courses in their own region or locality. The regional committees co-ordinate requests from teacher groups, school groups and parent groups for funds to conduct activities on educational matters. The funding covers payment of a speaker, tea for the participants, and their travel expenses. In the neighbourhood of country towns we found such meetings going on, though in the deep rural areas teachers relied on occasions organized from the Centre or by their regional director. Yet there was one district high school in the far north where the principal had got going a pattern of fortnightly staff meetings after school to discuss current educational problems and directions. He admitted the pattern was fragile, and depended on having an air-conditioned staff room (or library). He had to push hard to get his teachers to see that their self-education was an important part of their work.

On another occasion we struck a meeting organized quite independently by a working-party set up within one school. It was on reading, and under the influence of ideas about language across the curriculum, the craft teacher had agreed to open the discussion. What this demonstrates is that much teacher development can happen without outside help, but there is not much tradition of this. Also it is complicated by the cleaners. In school after school, we and the teachers were swept out as the afternoon bell went, though one of our case-study schools had a principal whose chief aim was that the school should be a community school and therefore continually in use. He had managed to come to terms with the cleaners over this. If teacher development and community use are important, surely more schools could do likewise?

The importance of teachers' local initiative in tackling their own in-service development should not be interpreted as an *alternative* to in-service work organized from the Education Department. Many submissions to CDC referred to the value of the work of advisory teachers, of the support and interest created by special units, such as the Language and Learning Unit, and of the way in which education officers as they move from school to school provide a valuable flow of ideas. All of this was appreciated and more was asked for. It is significant, however, that more was asked for from those who had already been in contact with new information, and had been able to attend conferences and workshops. This would seem a further reason for fostering in-service work at local level from local initiative, since, this way, more teachers are likely to become involved. It would seem as if the Education Department might switch its chief focus in teacher development from *directing* it to fostering *self-development* in the localities. Teachers have a long tradition of waiting for a lead from above. However, given such a shift of focus, education officers from their position at the centre will be aware of information and ideas not generally available, so they would have a special responsibility for guidance in these areas. An example of this is the interest and activity directly created by the work of the Language and Learning Unit.

Although the most urgently needed teacher development seems to us to be of the sort discussed above, there is also a need for long-term, coherent courses to develop relevant linguistic knowledge at a higher level. Such courses barely exist in Australia. Teachers who would like to pursue a course leading to a master's degree can only do this in literature. As teachers of English they are seen to carry the chief responsibility for language development in their schools, yet they have no higher education at all in the subject. Bachelor of Education courses are beginning to be developed which include some aspects of the language field, but these are designed for teachers of all subjects and are therefore not specifically language oriented. Ideally a combined English and education (teaching of English) course leading to an M.A. would suit English teachers - what the Americans call 'English Education'. Is it too much to hope the universities of Western Australia (and its Institute of Technology) might get such a joint degree going?

English teachers have an important cultural place in education. They are not only perfectors of spelling and punctuation; they are the link between 'communication studies' on the one hand, and also, through literature and students' creative writing, the link with the Arts. In a recent research study undertaken by the English Department at the University of Western Australia, the majority of a sample of upper school students (some two hundred) stated they would like more opportunities to do their *own* creative writing. This attitude is expressed (perhaps in rather extreme terms) by a Year 12 student, who wrote:

> *... certainly English is a curriculum where a student can learn about himself. The English lesson should also be enjoyable, an oasis from the rest of school drudgery. Unlike other subjects, English is an avenue for developing and putting to use creativity and imagination.*

The Education Department's Committee on the Arts in Education expresses a realization of the cultural importance of the arts, and is an example of the way a lead in a particular direction can come from the centre, providing a focus and channels for action. It is also important in asserting that English is not only a matter of reading and writing school subjects, but is also centrally concerned with the life of imagination.

Quality of teaching is so much a matter of intuitive response to people and occasions that it may seem that we have overstated the case of the importance of knowledge about language; but we think the evidence of this need is overwhelming. Firstly, there are the declarations by the teachers themselves; secondly, there is the fact of the totally conflicting, almost lunatic diversity of views about what language is and how it should be taught in schools - nicely put by the advisory teacher for English, who wrote:

> *While advising I discovered that people are everywhere on the teacher-development scale; they are also everywhere on the intelligence, dedication and understanding scale.*

Thirdly, there are the views of members of the public and the media speaking from a position of even greater ignorance than the teachers.

Finally and most important, is the fact that a teacher's work depends on his confidence and faith in what he is doing, and on his capacity to think about it, and change. He needs knowledge for this. Most of our most sensitive intuitions are incommunicable, or at least difficult to justify rationally. To make a case for what we are doing we need to be able to argue it from public knowledge. If a coherent notion of subject English is to be developed, public knowledge about language must be part of it, as well as thinking and caring classroom practice. We need to be our own men and women.

GRADING, ASSESSMENT AND EXAMINATIONS

There are five main areas which influence the teaching and learning of English:

- Levels and labelling.
- Assessments.
- Role of the BSE Moderator.
- Approval of courses.
- Public examinations: the Certificate of Secondary Education and the Tertiary Admissions Examinations.

Levels and labelling

When the Achievement Certificate was generally introduced for Years 8-10 in Western Australian schools in 1970, it was thought that students would be placed in streamed classes according to their level of ability in English. (The Education Department teachers' guides in English were all written on the assumption that classes would be streamed.) When the external public examination (Junior Certificate), was abolished (end of 1971 for Government schools), there was not sufficient confidence, either in the community or among teachers themselves, to do without some external measure of comparability. Consequently, in the early years of the Achievement Certificate, much emphasis was placed on comparability testing and placing students in 'correct' levels (advanced, intermediate or basic). Much of the emphasis in in-service work was placed on establishing comparable standards of written work, methods of assessment, and how to distinguish the work of a student working at advanced level from that of one working at intermediate or basic level. As a consequence, the feature which fixed itself in teachers' minds as the most important aspect of the new Achievement Certificate English was the importance of levels and grades.

Although the guidelines from the Board of Secondary Education and the Education Department stressed the need for flexibility and mobility between levels-and there was some opposition from schools to the Board's recommendations- teachers have tended to stick very closely to the percentages allocated through the comparability tests.

In many schools, changes of levels occurred only where the same number of students could be moved downwards as were moved upwards. No bridging programmes were developed for students moving to a higher level.

There has been an increasing awareness that this kind of numbers game, which treats students as objects, has bad effects on both the teacher's perceptions of the student, and the student's own self concept. A survey (Cook and O'Neill, 1979) into class structures and teaching practice in lower secondary school English classes in 1976 revealed these problems:

- The social effects of streaming. Basic-level classes often contained a large number of students who were regarded as social misfits. The bad social relationships were not just confined to the classroom, but spilled out into alienated hostile groups throughout the school, and into the students' lives in the community.
- The associated discipline problems. In the kinds of classes described above, students were hostile and unhappy; teachers became depressed and unhappy.
- Self-fulfilling prophecy syndrome. Some students saw themselves as 'nothings' in the eyes of their teacher and of the school, and behaved and achieved accordingly.
- Teachers' perceptions of students. Teachers tended to see classes as a single block of students who were all the same, rather than as individuals, and failed to see the potential of individuals.

Remarks made by teachers in the case-study schools supported these points. For example:

> *Streaming is bad for children at all levels. The bad ones get labelled that they're bad, and the good don't need to do any work. To me it's anti-social, the whole process, and I feel that, especially with a subject like English, I can set students at any acadamic level the same work, and I simply assess it at their level. What does it matter? You don't have to give them different work.*
>
> (Senior Master D, Case Study 5)

> *I just don't think you gain enough by having them streamed. I think it's very bad socially for the kids to be streamed. I think it is very easy to be traditional if you have streamed classes. I think a lot of bad blood is bred between the kids at various levels - between upper, middle and lower groups. We've seen that in the very small experience we had this year. The kids were very neurotic, very insecure about where they belonged and who was better than who. The kids can tend to be elitist and that just encourages it for the wrong reasons.*
>
> (Teacher, Case Study 5)

Although some schools ameliorated these problems, many quoted them, in the 1976 study, as the main reasons for re-arranging their English classes heterogeneously. Although many schools found that placing students in heterogeneously arranged classes reduced the overt symptoms of streaming, it may have merely disguised the effect that the levels and grades have on both students and teachers. Even though the classes were 'heterogeneous' teachers may have favoured the high achievers and allowed the low achievers to perform at a sub-standard level. Where the teachers' expectations were low, the students' performances tended not to improve. (Rosenthal and Jacobson 1968.)

It is still common for teachers to refer to students by level and comments such as 'Well, you can't expect much else - he's only a Basic' or 'Well, one can't ask the Basics to do that' are still prevalent.

Students also tend to accept their level as a judgement of their potential, and say such things as 'No, we don't do things like that because we're only the Basics.' There is a marked similarity of attitude both on the part of teachers and students to that with which the High School Certificate classes were regarded under the external exam system. (High School Certificate students were those who did not take the exam.) There is little evidence of curriculum development aimed at the level of achievement as a starting-point for remediation. In most cases curriculum development is left largely to the individual English teacher, and tends to be done on a fairly *ad hoc* basis.

Assessment

In spite of the effort which some schools have made to reduce the effect of level-labelling, it is still very strong because of the emphasis placed on the day-to-day process of assessment. The cumulative effective of constant assessment on, for example, the late developer, may be so deleterious that in fact he never does develop or realize his full potential. This has particular effect in a subject such as English, where cumulative learning should occur, but where short-term tests are often the substitute for more searching assessment methods and synthesizing of long-term understandings. Although the BSE does not specify the ways in which students are to be assessed, teachers are very conscious that they are accountable to the senior master and to the Board moderator for the levels and grades which they recommend.

As well as the importance placed on assessment, teachers are also influenced towards particular kinds of assessment. The Education Department teachers' guides and the BSE policy on assessment stress the importance of assessing every aspect of English, including different kinds of speaking, listening, reading and drama.

In actuality, in most schools, assessment is carried out almost entirely in the written mode. Many schools and many senior masters have devised an assessment model which allocates a certain percentage of marks to particular aspects of English. While every school needs to develop a policy about assessment, it is a great restraint to have aspects such as reading comprehension, grammar, formal essays and so on assessed regularly and at short intervals. Frequently this kind of model either excludes, or places a very low value on, speaking, reading, drama and personal writing.

For example, one school allocates 10% to oral work, 20% to reading comprehension, 10% to grammar and punctuation, 20% to formal essay, 20% for literature, and 20% for project work. Assessment models of this kind, which are devised within the school, have two essentially bad features that are inter-related.

Firstly, it leads to 'teaching-to-assess' and has a restrictive influence on what teachers are able to do in their classrooms. Secondly, it leads to a distortion of the total English programme as described in the First Year Guide (Education Department, 1974) by placing undue emphasis on writing, and restricting the kinds of writing to fairly mechanistic tasks undertaken for the teacher as an examiner. Therefore both the actual assessment policy of the school and the way in which it is derived can have severe implications for the teaching and learning of English. One teacher said:

> *There is a school assessment policy, and I as a teacher had nothing to do with it. As an English group we often protest strongly about the assessment procedures that go on here and how important they seem to have become and I think that the Senior Master takes our protests to the senior staff meeting, but they don't get very far.*
>
> (Teacher 2, Case Study 4)

Another teacher pointed to the gap between the student's interests and intentions in writing, and the set assessments:

> *I don't think I've ever had any writing worth a pinch of salt on anything that's my subject and not theirs ... The reading tests or the writing tests we have been doing at this school, they seem to be absolutely pointless. The kids in First Year (Year 8) are already learning a technique that they will probably use if and when they ever get around to doing a TAE. They are becoming limited at such an early age to glib and meaningless things that they seem to feel teachers want.*
>
> (Teacher 1, Case Study 4)

Some schools have reverted to end-of-term or end-of-semester examinations (or even at shorter intervals, and these may constitute up to 30 percent of a student's assessment. Sometimes these exams are across-the-board and sometimes by level, the common feature being that they are written, and usually contain language skills, reading comprehension, a formal essay, and sometimes literature questions. Apart from those comments already quoted at the beginning of this section, a number of teachers and students commented on testing:

> *One bugbear is still concerned with the Achievement Certificate, and the fact that so much of our time and energy in the classroom is beholden to that Achievement Certificate. The problems of comparability, the problems of testing, marking and all this, that is very frustrating, and that is the big gap between what I actually do and what I would like to do ... Because we are having troubles with comparability amongst all the lowest group classes, we now every three or four weeks do across-the-board testing, across-the-board comprehension for Year 9, across-the-board testing for Year 8 and so on.*
>
> (Teacher 2, Case Study 4)

> *The work I do with Years 8 and 9 should be affected more by the comparability tests, but I have almost been trying to ignore it. Again that worries me because I hate to think I am depriving my kids of something they may need, even though I regard the test as useless in assessing anything worth while. It does affect the work I do with the kids in that it affects their reaction to the things they produce. They worry about the irrelevancies - not the irrelevancies, but the less important matters of spelling things and are frightened to write because of it.*

> *The absurd thing is that you get a kid to finally write something and enjoy it, and then he goes on to his little comparability test, and it's marked by someone else and he gets 2½ for it. Then you have to sit and try and convince him that it is worth while.*
>
> (Teacher 1, Case Study 4)

> *Not really (any value in tests) because I don't reckon ... how well you do in a test depends so much on the day. You could have a headache, or you could just ... like, I get real tense in tests and get real worried, and then make stupid mistakes, but when you are just going in your class ... I think it should be taken more on class and discussion and stuff like that.*
>
> (Student Year 10, Case Study 4)

> *Sometimes what you do for the subject of a test has got nothing to do with what you are doing in English so ... we did this one of these two Aboriginal girls, and it was nothing to do with the subject we were doing at the time. It was strange ...*
>
> (Student Year 10, Case Study 4)

The extent to which schools use the comparability tests and the use to which they put the information varies enormously from school to school. For example, the school in Case Study 2 does all the comparability tests because, in the words of the principal, 'It's another way of looking at the kids'. The school in Case Study 5 does only the compulsory tests, and uses the information gained as little as possible, especially with references to placing individual students. Some schools, disturbed by the comparability test results, have gone in for across-the-board testing (see Case Studies 2 and 4) and preparing students for the comparability tests in order to improve the results of their students.

The Board of Secondary Education has been aware of the tendency of schools to use the tests to shape their curriculum, and has reduced the number of compulsory tests to one. However, many schools still take all the tests, and resisted the removal of some of the tests when the Board suggested this. Consequently, there are still optional comparability tests available.

There are historical reasons for this. As mentioned earlier the abolition of the Junior Certificate removed a predictable external examination, which was replicated in school examinations set at the end of each term for Years 8-10. Secondly, it removed a highly structured syllabus, and replaced it with a very open-ended guide for teachers to devise their own curricula and assessment and evaluation procedures. Most English teachers lacked any kind of training in curriculum development, assessment or evaluation procedures, and for lack of anything else have continued with summative forms of assessment based either on the Junior Certificate of the comparability test models. The need for school recommendations for levels and grades to approximate closely the Board of Secondary Education's allocations has meant that, in practice, the freedom expected of the Achievement Certificate has proved illusory. It seems that if the Board of Secondary Education wants to reduce the dependence of schools on comparability tests, it will have to reduce the number of tests available, even on an optional basis. There is then the possibility of the proliferation of school-constructed 'achievement' tests which may be even narrower in concept than the present comparability tests. Teachers therefore need to be made aware of other possibilities for assessment such as course work, internal accreditation and so on.

The responsibility for the current trend in assessment cannot all be laid at the door of the BSE. Some of the responsibility does, however, belong there. The comparability tests do place emphasis on writing and language skills. In school visits, the BSE moderator tends to inspect students' files, and to focus on the qualities of written work which distinguish it as being of advanced, intermediate or basic level. This situation has partly arisen because the moderator is not allowed to go into teachers' classrooms and observe the reading, speaking, listening and drama components of the English programme, and is therefore forced to focus on the written work. This raises the question of the role of the moderator, his relationship to teachers and students, and his role regarding the syllabus.

The role of the BSE moderator

Appointment

The BSE moderator is appointed on a three-year contract. The nature and status of this appointment raises several difficulties about the quality of the person in the moderator's job. Firstly, because of the three-year contract system, there is no simple way of disposing of an unsatisfactory moderator, although technically the contract can be broken by three months' notice. Secondly, it is a temporary position, and therefore people who are seeking a career in the Education Department or in autonomous tertiary institutions are not likely to apply for the position. This restricts the pool of people from which the moderator can be drawn and may affect the quality of the person appointed. Generally, a senior master with recent school experience, either in State or independent schools, is appointed. This may make objectivity difficult for a moderator, particularly if he does not consciously seek to broaden his own awareness of different modes of assessment, evaluation and moderation.

Liaison with other educational bodies

There seems to be no requirement or even expectation that a Board moderator will maintain professional contacts which would modify his own view of the subject. In 1978 the BSE moderator did serve as secretary for the two Joint Syllabus Committees in English and English Literature. He did not serve on the K-12 English Curriculum Committee, nor maintain any contact with Education Department curriculum and advisory teachers working in the area of lower secondary school English. There is no expectation that the moderator will attend Education Department in-service courses, nor belong to the English Teachers' Association. It could be argued that avoiding these contacts allows the moderator to be more objective and less influenced by the thinking of, for example, Education Department officers. It might be further argued that the regional meetings organized by the moderator provide sufficient contact with teachers. However, in the past, these meetings have tended to focus on assessment and comparability of written work, and do not keep the moderator in contact with changes in thinking about the teaching of English.

These factors taken together with the Board of Secondary Education ruling that the moderator is not allowed to go into classrooms (except at the express invitation of the principal and teacher concerned) could mean that in some ways the Board moderator could know less about the teaching of English and what takes place in English classrooms than any other person concerned with the teaching or administration of the secondary English programme. If the moderator is to function effectively, it seems essential that his conception of the nature of English, and the best ways of teaching and assessing English, ought to be in tune - to some degree at least - with the conceptions of the teachers, curriculum and advisory teachers and superintendents of English. Otherwise it seems likely that the gap between assessment procedures and the acceptable ways of teaching English will continue to grow.

Given that objectivity and freedom from influence of the Education Department is almost impossible because of the way in which the moderator is appointed, it may be advantageous to consider an alternative role. The current moderator (1979) is actively involved in professional contacts concerned with the teaching and learning of English. For example, he is a member of the executive committee of the English Teachers' Association; he is the convenor of the working-party preparing a paper, *Language Development - Writing*, to be presented at the International Conference on the Teaching of English in 1980; he is involved in the teacher education programme for Diploma of Education students at a tertiary institution; and he does maintain contact with curriculum and advisory teachers and superintendents of English through in-service courses and informal contacts. The present moderator is also attempting to broaden the base of assessment for certification through the use of tape-recorded group discussions and student talk, which allows him a slightly greater insight into the English teaching and learning process in the classroom. If the moderator is to be concerned with the assessment of all aspects of English, then he must be free to advise teachers and if necessary assist them in devising ways in which all of these aspects can be best assessed. This might allow assessment to become part of the desirable teaching and learning process rather than its purpose being seen merely as creating a score for certification. If the moderator were seen in any advisory role, with a positive contribution to offer, this might also serve to strengthen his relationship with schools. The present perception of the English moderator's role in the schools leads teachers to regard his visits either with indifference or hositility. Such a reaction can only be damaging for all parties - the Board, the moderator, the schools and teachers, and ultimately, the students for whom the Achievement Certificate is supposed to be a useful statement of achievement.

In the light of the shifting focus towards teacher assessment (in both lower and upper school) and the correspondingly increased professional responsibility, it would appear that the better the advice and support offered to the teachers, the more the quality of their students' education is likely to improve. The Board of Secondary Education moderator could contribute significantly to the thinking and understanding of teachers in regard to assessment. This seems particularly important when many teachers already employed have been inadequately trained in the field of assessment, examination and evaluation, and this is still not a significant aspect of the education of many student teachers.

The role of the Chief Moderator

The role of the Chief Moderator has changed slightly since its inception. Originally, the position was created to support the moderator and to overcome any lack of status that schools might perceive him to have. Now, the Chief Moderator acts as a consultant to the Board, to the moderators, and as a means of appeal for schools which are dissatisfied with the moderator's recommendations. The Chief Moderator is able to inspect the moderator's reports and can visit schools if it seems necessary.

Approval of courses

The Board of Secondary Education has the power to approve, and therefore by implication to reject, courses for Achievement Certification both in core subject areas and options. It is relatively easy for a school to gain approval for a new option but less so in the core subject areas. Initially the Board was criticized severely for its rigid attitude to innovation in core subject areas, although the Teachers' Union regarded this as an advantage in protecting students from ill-thought-out experiments. Most recently, the Board has adopted a conspectus, or umbrella model, of course design to allow more flexibility to schools and to modify the moderating procedures. Thus there is great variety in social studies courses, and several different mathematics courses. In English, there is only one course outline approved (Board of Secondary Education 1973), but its interpretation and implementation varies according to the individual school and the individual teacher.

This course outline has not been revised since it was first written in 1969. It no longer reflects accurately the ways in which English is taught in secondary schools, nor is it consistent with the advice offered by Education Department superintendents and curriculum and advisory officers. For example, the emphasis on one source book that is central to the whole programme and selected for its appropriateness to the level of attainment of the students is no longer the norm, nor is it encouraged. Teachers are encouraged to select material from a wide *range* of source books, literature and audio-visual resources in developing units of work suited to the interests, intentions, and levels of achievement of their students. Secondly, there is a contradiction between the remarks about *Functional Language Exercises* and those about *Language Skills;* the remarks about *Language Skills* are particularly at variance with the Director General's Policy Statement, *Language, Literacy and Literature* (Policy Statement No. 19, 1979), the printed advice offered in teachers' guides and newsletters for English teachers, and the advice offered by Education Department officers in school visits and in-service courses. Teachers are actively discouraged from the 'drills-and-skills' approach, the 'back-to-basics' movement and textbooks full of language exercises taken out of the meaningful context of use. The inadequacy of comment on the place and function of literature in this course outline is also a matter for serious concern, and may in part account for the cursoriness of its treatment in many lower secondary school English classes.

It is not the fault of the Board of Secondary Education that the course outline is so out of phase with current practice and thinking. The Board's function is to approve courses, not to re-write existing ones.

Therefore it seems a matter of some urgency that the Education Department should submit to the Board a revised course outline that more accurately describes English courses in schools, and which reflects current theory about the teaching and learning of English.

In spite of the more liberal conspectus approach adopted by the Board, there are still problems for schools wishing to replace any of the core subjects with alternative courses. For example, a humanities course was proposed as a substitute for the English and social studies core subjects. The course proposed was an integrated study combining the aims and objectives of the English and social studies courses, and some aspects not essential to either of those courses as presently described. The Board agreed to the substitution provided that the humanities course was assessed and certificated as two discrete subjects, English and social studies. The reason given by the Director of the Board for this decision was that the Board had a responsibility as the certifying authority to protect the interests of the students. It was thought that students might be disadvantaged in the eyes of employers if their Achievement Certificates had a single grade for humanities, rather than separate grades for English and social studies. Although this decision may protect the interests of the students in terms of employment, it has wider educational implications. If assessment is supposed to reflect *all* aspects of the course, then it seems a poor compromise to assess only those aspects and to deny the objectives of the integrated course. In addition, it seems contradictory for the school to expect teachers to undertake integrated teaching, while at the same time the Board demands continuous assessment in two separate subject areas.

A teacher has the schizoid choice of trying to fulfil the school aims or keeping the two subjects separate for the benefit of two different moderators.

The particular situation of the humanities course proposals raises the wider issue of the power that the Board of Secondary Education has over innovation. As both the course-approving and the certificating authority, the Board has complete control over courses in the schools for which accreditation is sought from the Board. The only alternative to a course approved by the Board is for a school to issue its own certificate for alternative courses. Some of the larger independent schools have taken this step, feeling that their own certificate will have sufficient prestige to complete favourably with the Board of Secondary Education Achievement Certificate on the employment market. Most State schools are reluctant to take such a step because it may disadvantage their students by denying them an Achievement Certificate with wider community approval in exchange for a school certificate with a very localized acceptance. Faced with such a choice, most State schools accept the Board's ruling, and innovation or change can be effectively stifled.

Summary

In general terms, the Board of Secondary Education and the assessment procedures carried out in its name have an inhibitory effect on the teaching and learning of English. The system of comparability tests, levels and grades, leads to teaching directed towards assessment, with a corresponding emphasis on writing for the teacher as an examiner. It seems that as long as comparability tests are available (even on an optional basis) many schools and teachers will misuse them and shape their teaching programme towards them. The bias towards writing for the teacher as an examiner contributes to the neglect of other aspects of English, or at least to a feeling on the part of teachers and students that other aspects are not important as they don't count for assessment. The emphasis on assessment from the very early days of the Achievement Certificate may have contributed to a tendency to overlook what constitutes the proper content of an English course, and what are the best methods for teaching and learning English.

There is a need for these latter questions to be seriously addressed. The present course description of Achievement Certificate English is both inadequate and inaccurate. This is not a question for the Board to resolve, but rather one for the Education Department and other interested bodies to tackle in presenting a revised course outline.

The position of the moderator has been discussed at some length. The nature and status of the position has some features which make it very difficult for a moderator to make a positive contribution to the teaching and learning of English. This can only be overcome by a change in the nature of the position, perhaps moving closer towards the advisory role outlined in the discussion. Other factors, such as the continued professional development of the moderator, seem to be left too much to the attitudes and itnerests of the individual moderator, rather than being regarded as part of the job.

The present system of course approval leaves the controlling power over innovations in the Achievement Certificate completely with the Board of Secondary Education. The policy of the Board has been liberalized somewhat by the conspectus model of course approval, but it is still not satisfactory for schools designing integrated courses. The Board may see its position as necessary to protect the employment opportunities of students, but schools also see the need to provide their students with a commercially viable Achievement Certificate, and between the two perspectives, innovation in State schools frequently withers.

One of the problems in making any statements about assessment, grading and the Board of Secondary Education is the gap between matters of fact and matters of perception. Teachers, individually and collectively, have perceptions about the Board, the comparability tests, the moderator, assessment and grading, which are not always grounded in fact, but in some distortion of it. However, the perceptions, internalized as operational constructs, are more influential in shaping teachers' actions than are the facts. If positive changes are to occur in this area, not only do some matters of fact need revision but intensive in-service work (perhaps through BSE Regional meetings and through the Education Department) is also needed to broaden teachers' perceptions and attitudes to assessment, and to provide them with increased expertise and confidence in different modes of assessment, evaluation and moderation.

Public examinations: the Certificate of Secondary Education and Tertiary Admissions Examinations

Students who leave school at the end of Year 10 are awarded the Achievement Certificate. Their grades are determined partly by their teachers, and partly by the allocation of percentages of students in each school to Advanced, Intermediate or Basic levels as a result of the State-wide comparability tests, (taken in Year 9, and sometimes in Year 10 as well). Awards of 'pass' or, 'credit pass' can be made in each of the three levels or, in extreme cases, a 'no award' may be given.

In special circumstances (see Special Innovation School No. 2), students who stay on at school for a further year have an opportunity to up-grade their Year 10 results.

For students who remain at school for Years 11 and 12, there are three courses offered in the English area: *Tertiary Admissions English, Tertiary Admissions English Literature,* and *General English.* Of these, the first two subjects count for admissions to a tertiary institution (indeed, one or the other is compulsory) and also for the Certificate of Secondary Education; General English is not a subject for tertiary admission, but is a Certificate of Secondary Education course. Both of the Tertiary Admissions Examination courses are currently under review by their respective Joint Syllabus Committees.

Until very recently (1976) Tertiary Admissions Examinations English and English Literature were the only courses in the English area available to students in Years 11 and 12. Perhaps this was not of much consequence when most students who continued to Years 11 and 12 wanted to enter tertiary institutions. However, the upper school population has changed markedly in recent years. The Planning Branch (Education Department annual reports 1954-1978) supplied the following figures on retention rates:

Base Population Year 7	Enrolled in Year 11	Enrolled in Year 12
1954: 7 875 students	1959: 12.7%	1960: 11.1%
1963: 12 862 students	1968: 25.2%	1969: 18.4%
1972: 17 348 students	1977: 46.1%	1978: 28.3%

General English

Thus, since 1960, the percentage of the base population retained in Year 12 has increased by 2½ times. It seems reasonable to assume that the Tertiary Admissions Examination courses are no longer suitable for all students, and that some alternative course designed for students who do not wish to enter tertiary institutions, but who do want two more years of secondary education, would be more desirable. In 1978, the only alternative to the TAE courses was General English, originally designed for the four State schools with agricultural wings, but approved for six other schools in 1979. The need for alternatives to TAE courses was discussed in the case-study schools:

> *If we didn't have an alternative in English, it would mean that every student would have to do TAE English. That's the situation at the moment. It's undesirable and it has been seen that we need something different. So they are looking at the General English CSE course. I'm fairly certain that, with the modifications that they have submitted, this will be the one which will be accepted. If not, they will run an alternative English course.*
>
> (Principal, Case Study 5)

> *We've still got good kids in our schools, but they go from there down to there. There are kids from basic levels coming up (to Years 11 and 12) who can't write a sentence, who can't put two or three sentences together. You're trying to teach the same type of material, the same type of course, to those varying youngsters. Some of the things you can do and do quite well and*

> *get away with, but there are so many areas. The sort of thing the kid who's going on to tertiary level wants is completely removed from the kid who's going to leave, who is probably only in Year 11 for one year, or who has come back to school because he thinks he's going to get a bit out of it. At the end of Year 12 he's going to leave and get a job. He doesn't want the same sort of academic approach as the tertiary student. That's why we're introducing that General English Course next year.*

(Senior Master P, Case Study 5)

> *The course came into being when we felt there was a large group of students who wanted to return to school after their third year of (high school) education ... but weren't looking at going on to tertiary education. Many weren't ready for further education either, in terms of their personal development, and many really didn't know what they wanted to do when they left school and therefore they were tentative about going into something that had a heavy pre-vocational interest.*

(Principal, Special Innovation School 2)

Looking ahead, this principal planned to expand the number of different courses offered to Year 11 students, including the general course, a commerce course, and a pre-vocational programme as well as the academic course leading to the TAE. The need for a variety of alternatives was taken up by the principal of Case Study 2, where the General English course was already offered for agricultural-wing students:

> *I'm not against a General English course in high schools at all. But the trouble is when you get to moderation, and if this is taken up by twenty other schools, you're then forced into a situation where the exam itself must be common to all schools. Once you do this, of course, if you're going to do justice to the kids and give them every opportunity to get their maximum grading, then you must teach to the exam. My concern is that the more it becomes general, in the sense that it can be done by any school, the more the agricultural area must tend to be phased out. However, our proposed solution to this is to make certain areas optional, in that we can still retain an area which can be done by specifically agricultural students ... Something that would be valuable in a normal senior high school is a course in General English for those kids (and there are more and more of them) who are not aiming at the TAE. At the moment, whether they are aiming at TAE or not, they have to do the TAE approach and I think it's their feeling that another course in English would be of great value. It could be geared to the local needs of kids in relation to what they have seen about them far more than a TAE-type one, which must be a State-wide exam.*

(Principal, Case Study 2)

This principal also raised a problem for schools (especially small ones) attempting to offer alternative courses. There is a fairly strong consumer resistance, among both students and employers, to non-TAE courses.

Principal: *We just haven't the numbers to run alternative courses. And the kids here seem very determined to stick with the more traditional things. We can't* *get the boys to do technical drawing and the numbers in our applied technology class are so small, in fact, that we have to combine the class. They seem very TAE orientated. Anything we've put up as a possible, they're just not interested in - they want to do biology, economics and so on.*

Interviewer: *Maybe that's got something to do with the country, because I grew up in the country, and we know that the only chance of getting a job outside the town was passing that TAE and getting to teachers' college or whatever.*

Principal: *I think this is quite a factor. I think that kids in the city can see far more opportunities whereas our kids see it as a means of getting something outside the town, because there isn't much going here. About half of our kids apply for tertiary - about fifteen out of our group of twenty-nine - in Year 12.*

(Case Study 2)

The difficulty exists in part because the TAE course is made to serve two functions - that of tertiary admission, and as part of the certificate for completing five years of secondary education. However, as indicated by the conversation above, and by a comment from the Director of the Board of Secondary Education, many students would continue to take TAE English for reasons of prestige, or wider acceptability. Although the opportunity exists to develop alternative courses (twenty-two alternative course have been approved at CSE level for 1979-80), little has been done in the English area. It may be that teachers lack the expertise, time and resources to develop and implement suitable alternatives; however, the Education Department has done little to establish the nature of the need for alternative upper school English courses, and to develop courses to meet these needs where they exist.

TAE English

The description of this course in the handbook of CSE and TAE syllabuses is open-ended, and emphasizes the need for wide reading, discussion, viewing and writing for a variety of audiences. The course is examined in two papers. The first, a forty-five-minute multiple choice comprehension test, tests the ability of students to read and make fine distinctions about fairly dense passages (chiefly drawn from literature) in a short space of time. The results of this test have a high correlation with teachers' estimates, and comprehension and composition scores. The other paper is a two-and-a-quarter-hour written paper. The comprehension section of the written paper presents students with a wide range of different kinds of writing for comment of an extended kind. The composition topics offer a wide choice of subjects to students in order to allow students to write at length on a subject which, it is hoped, will interest them. The English syllabus has generally been regarded as offering a good deal of scope to teachers and to students, and the examiners have endeavoured, as far as practicable, not to restrict this. Ideally, the best preparation for such an examination would include a wide range of reading, discussion, viewing and continuous writing, on a wide range of topics and for a variety of purposes.

From observation, it would appear that many teachers base their English programmes on the structure of the examination, rather than the course description in the handbook. The only opportunities that many Year 11 and 12 students have for continuous writing is in response to reading comprehension questions and essays similar to those which appear on TAE papers. The audience for this kind of writing is usually the teacher as an examiner, although sometimes fellow students may also read and discuss the writing. Similarly, in some schools, students spend a considerable proportion of their time doing multiple-choice tests to prepare for the exam. In interviews, when asked about these features of their Englisn programmes, teachers said that it was to practise for the exam, or to get students up to examination standard. Research by Dr John Hay has suggested that (apart from familiarizing students with the form of the test) the repeated practice of multiple-choice tests was not of significant importance to students' scores. Therefore it would seem that much of this so-called test practice could be a waste of time and that skills tested in this way would be better developed by close reading and discussion of a wide range of passages of writing.

This is not the complete picture of upper school English teaching. In two of the case-study schools, and one of the special innovation schools, Year 11 and 12 students were encouraged to write 'creative' assignments where the choice of subject matter, mode of writing and presentation was either left to the student or negotiated with the teacher. The writing process in these circumstances was characterized by a high degree of involvement and high quality. Both in terms of content and surface presentation. Writing of this kind is actively encouraged by the course description in the handbook, and seems to be one of the best ways to prepare for the examination. It is unfortunate that this approach does not seem to be more widespread, instead of teachers concentrating on rehearsal and drilling of composition and comprehension skills at the expense of reading and discussion of complete works, an extended writing for a variety of audiences and purposes.

Some of these characteristics of upper school English teaching seem to arise because of the gap between the intentions of the examiners and the written documents such as the syllabus, exam papers and examiners' reports on the one hand, and the perceptions of teachers and students and the use to which many teachers put the written documents on the other. This gap does not exist because the examiners and syllabus committee make no attempts to communicate with teachers - there are documents published, public examiners' meetings and one-day seminars held. Rather, the gap seems to exist because of deep-seated beliefs held by teachers (and probably originating in their own schooling) that the best way to pass exams such as English is by drills and skills. This belief was reflected in the comments quoted at the opening of this section. Even teachers who question that belief still find that it influences their teaching either because of their own sense of responsibility or because of the effect that the exam has on their students.

Many students see all English activities as directed towards the examination, and often in highly specific terms. Even those students who see wider purposes in their English programme still see the exam as a major hurdle:

> *Everything you are doing at class and in English class is only preparing you for exams at the end of the year. If you were out working and you weren't at school, you wouldn't have read the book.*
>
> (Student, Year 12, Case Study 4)

> *Well, I think the main objectives involved in any sort of programme in high school is in 4th and 5th Year, to get you through the exam, but I don't think that's the thing because you find that a lot of people do fail the exam but they still have picked up a lot of hints, points and things that are going to help them later in life, which I think is the main idea.*
>
> (Student, Year 12, Case Study 4)

TAE English Literature

English Literature is a course of study over two years designed to develop in students appreciation of major literary forms in English (and presumably some of the books which comprise these forms). In this course, specified texts for detailed study and anthologies for wider reading are prescribed for Year 12 students. No texts are prescribed for Year 11, although it is recommended that students should begin to study the anthologies. Apart from this, students are expected to read widely under the direction of their teachers.

The course is examined in one three-hour paper. The paper is divided into four sections, and candidates are expected to answer one question from each section. Sections I, II and III correspond to the syllabus divisions Poetry, Drama and Fiction, and the questions refer to specific texts for detailed study. There is usually only one question on each text. The questions in Section IV cover the range of poetry, drama and fiction, but do not necessarily refer to specific texts. The form of these questions is not specified in advance.

This course is presently under review, it having been thought for some time to be too restrictive. Specific areas of complaint have concerned the set texts and the nature of the examination. In 1978, the detailed study poetry list consisted of four poets and three anthologies of Australian verse; the drama list for detailed study contained only five writers; and the detailed study list of novels named only five writers. In each case, two titles had to be selected for detailed study. As well as being limited in terms of number, the range of writers represented has also tended to be fairly narrow. However, with the projected revisions, this should be rectified by 1980.

The nature of the examination questions has also come under close scrutiny, and it is possible that in future, questions will be more open-ended, and not tied to specific texts. This would enable students to select from their reading, and possibly display their full knowledge more than they can in the present examination.

There is very little direction given in the handbook about the way in which the course should be taught, except to emphasize that reading should not be restricted to set texts. From observation, it seems that most of the class work is teacher-centred and directed towards dissection of texts, although in some lessons there was open discussion and small group discussion of particular passages or ideas. The work in student files consisted largely of copied, dictated or duplicated notes, and examination-type essays on literary topics. There seemed to be comparatively few notes made by the students for themselves, and almost no expressive writing where students sorted out their ideas about, and responses, to works of literature.

The writing did reveal rather mechanical or set-pattern approaches to answering examination questions. This tendency is borne out in the examiners' report, when each year the complaint is made about stock or trained responses, rather than students revealing any involvement with, or depth of understanding of, the texts. This is, of course, the gloomiest end of the spectrum. In some classes students do discuss their reading, and are encouraged to make personal responses and judgements, and do speak in an excited and animated way about the value of their course. Such instances, however, are regrettably few. As with TAE English, this is brought about more by the way in which teachers have chosen to interpret the course, and the dominance of the examination in their thinking, rather than the recommendations in the handbook.

The Effect of TAE on English and English Literature

The examinations and preparation for them tend to dominate the thinking of both teachers and students, especially in Year 12. In Year 11, there is a dichotomy in the thinking of teachers. Some teachers do regard Year 11 as a year in which students are free to read, explore, discuss and develop their ideas without the threat of an external examination. Other teachers see Year 11 as a corrective year in which what has been left undone in previous years must be rectified, and students must be brought up to scratch. Often, 'scratch' is seen in terms of mechanics of language, and students spend much of their time on SRA kits, exercises and drills from books such as *Mastering English* (Wheeler and Walshe) and *Using Better English* (Allsopp and Hunt), and reading comprehension extracts. The first term exam is also frequently used as some kind of bloodletting instrument whereby those students who are unlikely TAE candidates will be encouraged to leave school, and those that remain will be sufficiently intimidated to do as they are told for the rest of the course. Exams used for this purpose frequently include questions lifted straight from previous TAE papers - that is, questions designed for students at the end of a two-year course, not for students less than one-quarter of the way through the course.

The effects of the examinations are not limited to Years 11 and 12. Many teachers of Year 10 students are conscious that some of their students will wish to go on to Years 11 and 12, and regard Year 10 as a preparation for this, rather than the conclusion of a three-year course of study for the Achievement Certificate. This is revealed in the reasons for which nearly 50% of high and senior high schools stream their Year 10 students, although they may have been in heterogeneously arranged classes in Years 8 and 9 (Cook and O'Neill, 1979). Comments made in the heterogeneous class study revealed a particular concern for students who might study literature in upper school. Supporting evidence was found in the case-study schools in this study. For instance, Year 10 students in Case Study 4 are streamed into tertiary-oriented classes (TOC) and vocationally oriented classes (VOC) for the purpose of providing an intensive preparation for upper school in the former, and for employment in the latter. Classroom observation and examination of the written work indicates that after this streaming process occurs, students in both streams spend more time on language exercises and drills than they did in the earlier part of the year. Individual teachers also feel some responsibility to prepare Year 10 students for upper school:

> *I give greater emphasis to using English. I do give exercises in usage, analysis of texts and literary criticisms on occasions. Perhaps I tend more towards extra study of English towards the end of Year 10 because of those who may go on to Years 11 and 12.*
>
> (Teacher, Case Study 1)

'Practice for upper school exams' is also one of the reasons offered for setting examinations at the end of Year 10.

Conclusions

There is a widespread belief that the best way to prepare students for examinations is through constant practice of the same kinds of things that appear on the papers. This persists in spite of frequent comment at examiners meetings and in published form that this is not the case. 'We do not think that comprehension tests of the written or multiple-choice variety should be given much emphasis in the classroom. A recent study commissioned by the London Association for the Teaching of English has indicated that the common assumption that a regular dose of comprehension exercises will improve (students') perception of meaning, tone, intention or structure of given passages, and that repeated practice will give progressive improvement is misguided. Regular reading in a variety of forms improves students' performance in comprehension tests at least as much as does drilling in comprehension exercises, and the carryover into other English work is effected far more satisfactorily through a wide-ranging reading course in which comprehension checks are only occasionally (and subtly) used.' (Bennett and Hay 1973.)

Increasingly, research is producing evidence that writing abilities are best developed by writing in an extended way for a wide variety of audiences and purposes, and by the opportunity for discussion and re-drafting, rather than constant drilling of word usage, rules about language usage, and study of language isolated from its context.

However, it seems that many teachers (and the wider community, to judge by the strength of the 'back-to-basics' lobby) do not easily modify their ideas and their practice in the light of research, or short-term in-service work and continue to operate on deep-seated constructs about language development, assessment and examination that they may have acquired in the process of their own schooling.

QUOTATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS

In an attempt to come to terms with the problems of assessment in all its forms we interviewed not only teachers and students in the case-study schools, but also some of the people most directly concerned. Diverse views were expressed. We illustrate the range of these in the following quotations from interviews. We also give a list of reports and other publications consulted for this section.

FROM THE SCHOOLS

About the Board of Secondary Education Achievement Certificate:

> *I thing grading and assessment of students' work tends to kill their enthusiasm and creativity. They seem so willing to please in Year 8, but the inevitable assessments and placements seem to decrease the confidence of less able students. I can't see a way around it. Each term they must be graded for reports and at the end of the year for the Board of Secondary Education.*
>
> (Teacher, Case Study 1)
>
> *I hate the division of students into Basic, Intermediate and Advanced. It seems dreadful to me to label Year 8 students (in fact, any year for that matter). Hence we don't do it until December because it is so soul-destroying. We are trying to*

> *break down years of tradition. I am certain that division into Basic, Intermediate and Advanced has not any real incentive value at all and rather it has a negative reaction for many students.*
>
> (Senior Master P, Case Study 5)

> *I do as few of them (comparability tests) as I possibly can. In a way I rather like the one at the beginning of Year 8, because it grades the kids according to the entire population of the State ..... We get a piece of paper which says 'You have 33% of your Year 8 students in Basic'. So, O.K. they're Basic; we don't grade them or anything, but we just go ahead and teach them. The thing that annoys me is that, at the end of the year, I'm still supposed to have 33% Basic, no matter how good a teacher I've been ..... It makes me so mad; where, in fact, is the incentive for me to teach? And just what does this mean? It means that a kid is graded. We say that with the Achievement Certificate we're not going to grade them until the end of their tenth year. What do we do? We give them a test the day they walk into the school, and that's their grade for the rest of their school career.*
>
> (Senior Master D, Case Study 5)

> *I'm all for grading in classes. I've never wavered from this. I feel particularly in Maths it's most important. I feel it's important too in English. I feel you can teach (I know it's a rude word) but you can teach kids to become professional in the basic skills of writing ..... I'm quite sure that you can teach these (low ability students) the basic skills of communication, which are about all they're going to need. I feel that you have those kids in one area and you get right to them. You have your top kids in another area and that's where you can really do your extension work. If you haven't got this arrangement, if you have them all mixed up together, I feel that the teacher tends to teach to the middle; hence I feel that both ends are neglected.*
>
> *It is inherent in my grouping that students can move around as much as they like, according to how they achieve. So we find at the end of first term we have quite a bit of a shuffle ..... If we find that halfway through the term a kid suddenly blossoms he can be swapped around. He doesn't have to wait till the end of term. It's inherent in my ability-grouping system that they must be mobile right up to Year 10.*
>
> *From teacher assessment in first term we place students for the beginning of second term. Generally, there is not a great deal of movement - it's the students on the border-lines that shift, not those in the middle. Generally speaking, by the time they get to Year 10, they are fairly well patterned.*
>
> (Principal, Case Study 2)

About the Tertiary Admissions Examination at the end of Year 12, people said:

> *In English, the TAE demands that they have to be able to write a particular sort of essay. If you've looked at the topics of the essays, they are mainly dealing with topics that are beyond most of the kids, wrapped up with all sorts of quotations and things ... But nowhere in those essays is their anything where a kid could use his imagination, or express his experiences ... The course is still dominated by the examination and I don't care*

what anybody says. What am I going to do this afternoon? I'm going to give some kids an objective test. Why? Because they're going to have to do an objective test in the exam; they need to know what it looks like, they need to have the feel of it, so I've got to spend two periods this afternoon doing that. And if they didn't have the exam hanging over them, I wouldn't do it ... The same applies to the style programme ... you've got an exam, therefore you sandwich in as many of the other things that you want to do.

In Year 11 you sure can shut a blind eye - the old Nelson touch. But when it comes to Year 12 and the exam is beginning to loom, you are forced to spend so much of the time on the exam - writing essays, endless essays. One a week I get out of my kids. And this is the only way they're going to measure up in some form to getting through that exam, which dominates their thinking and your thinking. The sooner we get rid of that the better as far as I'm concerned. I can't understand why the tertiary institutions don't conduct their own, or why they have them at all.

(Senior Master P, Case Study 5)

The problem is in English that there is a sort of line that borders things like discussions and vocab, which we like doing. And then there's another line for stuff which is examinable, like sitting down and writing an essay for forty minutes, which we are going to get in the exam, but on a large scale. Things like verbs and nouns - we do things like that, which nobody likes; but they are the things we are going to end up being examined on. Whether we can sit and hold a discussion for an hour isn't going to help us much in our TAE.

(Student Year 11, Case Study 5)

That's one of the main bugbears of the course. Most of the work is geared to the exam. Although I've tried to encourage their areas of interest, even though there are alternative courses set down, you're not given the time, because you must keep in mind that the exam is looming at the end of the year. The students expect this, they expect to be prepared for the exam, and that's what their parents expect. And you haven't really got half the time to explore other areas.

(Teacher 3, Case Study 2)

FROM OTHERS DEEPLY CONCERNED

DR JOHN HAY, University of Western Australia, emphasized that it is only one aspect of a test for it to be a good test. There is overwhelming evidence that a test's influence on the teaching that precedes it - the backwash effect - is of great significance. Because of this, the backwash effect should always be considered in any evaluation of the success or failure of a test. He also emphasized that multiple-choice tests, while relatively cheap to mark and analyse, because of computer technology, are costly to construct both in terms of expertise and time. Nonetheless he maintained that they can and do complement the essay-type tests which are traditional (and in many ways indispensable) parts of English examining. Furthermore, he thought both the English literature and English syllabuses were in danger of becoming moribund. Both seemed to him too rigidly constrained by the generic divisions of novel, poetry and drama and, in the case of literature, by the exclusion of medieval literature. The important freedom for teachers to experiment in their selection of texts which existed in the English course was missing in the literature course. In both courses he thought that the relationship between recommended and prescribed texts needed re-evaluation. He feared that a decline was perceptible in the importance attached in both courses to the study of poetry and poetry studies in both English and English literature should be reasserted. Regretting that examining was generally considered only as a final (or terminal) activity in a course, he suggested that a need existed for a greater range of diagnostic tests to be administered throughout English courses and he expressed the strong wish that teachers' assessment should play a significant role in determining the grade awarded in such examinations as TAE English.

MR BRUCE BENNETT, University of Western Australia, spoke with some heat about the good things that lie within the freedom of TAE English. There is no set syllabus, and clear advice about making use of this freedom to develop wide, appropriate and creative writing and reading is given in course outline. Teachers who only teach to the two papers are ignoring the possibilities.

MR FRANK McKENZIE, Director, Board of Secondary Education, drew attention to the fact that in the Achievement System there can be a confusion of terms in that 'Advanced', 'Intermediate', and 'Basic' are used to describe courses as well as levels of performance. The course has not necessarily anything to do with performance. He agreed that tests could exert a powerful influence on teaching and that this was undesirable but unavoidable since some teachers misused the certifying authority and perverted its intentions. He thought that shifting the focus of the examinations towards teachers marking (course work) called for increased professional responsibility from teachers.

Furthermore, he quoted the Teachers' Union representatives as thinking that the 'constraints' imposed by the Board of Secondary Education have the effect of safe-guarding the children from ill-thought-out experiments. Dr McKenzie expressed his personal view that he would like to see the comparability exercises and the moderating exercises reduced somewhat.

MR D. TOMLINSON, Chairman of the Examining Panel for English, pointed out that one of the main constraints for TAE examiners is that no change of exam format can be introduced without prior notice (to give teachers time to prepare students for the new exam). Therefore the papers are highly predictable, and reinforce the tendency for the exam to determine the course. Mr Tomlinson also pointed out that the Board of Secondary Education is bound by its own charter. The historical problems of parity of esteem, status of the Achievement Certificate, political influence and industrial constraints have forced it into its present position.

MR C. JEFFERY, Moderator in English, Board of Secondary Education (1979), commented on the rigidity and uniformity of the assessment systems established by schools. Up to seventy per cent of large schools (three English teachers or more) allocate specified percentages to particular aspects of English for Years 8-10, placing emphasis on reading comprehension, formal essays, letters and language skills. Relatively little weighting is given for oral work and writing for a variety of audiences and purposes.

DR D. MOSSENSON, Director-General of Education, said he thought the new systems of testing had run away from the aims ... 'It was a progressive thing at the beginning but it's become formalized and its own mad momentum just continues'. There was no longer the need there was ten years ago to satisfy a doubting public and to allay the fears of employers. There need not be the same patterns and the same conservative decisions as when the scheme originated.

PERSONS INTERVIEWED AND CONSULTED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS SECTION

Bennett, Bruce	Senior Lecturer in English, University of W.A.; ex Joint Chief Examiner, English: Director of Research into the Development of Writing Abilities, Years 15-18.
Hay, Dr John	Head, Department of English, Supervising Examiner TAE English, Chairman, Objective Test Construction Committee; Consultant to Examiners' Panel, English Literature.
Jeffery, Christopher	Board of Secondary Education Moderator in English.
McKenzie, Frank	Director, Board of Secondary Education.
Mossenson, Dr D	Director-General, Education Department of Western Australia.
Tomlinson, Derrick	Chairman of Examining Panel, English; ex Board of Secondary Education Moderator in English.

English teachers, principals of case-study schools.

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SUBJECT ENGLISH

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF DIRECTIONS IN ENGLISH TEACHING

Views about what English is show a surprising pattern of change compared with other subjects in the curriculum. These changes are often attributed to the pendulum of fashion, but a close look shows that the pendulum swings are peripheral. The general direction has been determined by the work of linguists, psychologists and sociologists and has been, on the whole, in the direction pointed to by a greater understanding of the nature of language, and of the needs of children in their contemporary contexts.

The belief that change is determined by fashion is a dangerous one, because it discounts knowledge; it is therefore worth while to take a brief look at how we got to where we now are in English teaching.

In Britain, English did not become recognized as a subject at all until the early 1920s. Before this - and for sometime after - the most prestigious teachers of English were holders of degrees in Classics, and Latin and Greek being dead languages, the focus was on translation, composition and learning the grammatical forms. Furthermore, since there was no spoken language to serve as a living resource, knowledge of the grammar was indispensable to learning to compose in Latin - and for many students their classical education began and ended with grammar. Alongside these (supposedly) initial grammatical studies, for those who progressed far enough, there was the study of classical literature and philosophy - the source of our notions of 'the humanities'. This model of English teaching came to be known as the 'skills-and-heritage' model, or, as most people know it today, 'language and literature', or, as the students realistically see it, 'English and literature'.

The first effect of the establishment of English as a subject in its own right, even with teachers now qualified in English rather than in Classics, was to translate the old patterns into English, with grammar and formal composition and a study of English classical literature at the heart of it. The ancestral model dies hard; and in spite of evidence to the contrary from the learning of living languages, faith in its *practical* efficacy still remains deeply rooted in people's beliefs.

This pattern was reinforced by the struggle for a new subject to establish its academic respectability. In order to rank with other subjects it was thought to need a hard core of study, otherwise, it was thought a mother tongue which is not basically learned in school must needs be a soft option. Thus grammar and the study of classical texts with the accompany literary criticism provided the required 'hard core', and English became a 'content' subject, like any other subject in the curriculum, with its focus on learning *about* literature.

But counter influences were at work. Linguists and people teaching *modern* languages, particularly English as a foreign language, were concerned to teach the *use* of the language rather than knowledge *about* it, and were shifting the focus onto the spoken language, and to teaching language for special or limited purposes - for instance, reading within a particular field such as science, or speaking to establish communication in practical situations. English as a foreign language was clearly on a different path; its focus was on *use*, and its demands and practices were essentially different from those of 'content' subjects.

Gradually the influences which had caused modern language teaching to re-model itself began also to affect the teaching of the monther tongue. People began to ask different questions. Instead of asking 'How do we best teach grammar?' or 'What literature should we choose to be studied?', they began to ask such questions as, 'What is the role of the mother tongue in children's development? What part does it play in their learning at school, and at home? How is it learned anyway, and can teachers learn anything about how to develop it in school from studying the way it operates in homes and the various social groups that people belong to? What are its 'rules' of use as distinct from precept?' Such questions led to attempts to identify the individual and social functions of a mother tongue and to a shift towards developing the use of English instead of concentrating on knowledge about it.

In the 1950s and 1960s it became apparent that another model for English was emerging - a model which saw the mother tongue as a major factor in intellectual and personal development. After the Anglo-American Conference at Dartmouth, U.S.A., in 1966, this emerging model became known as the 'growth model'. This implied a shift from an emphasis on children learning an adult public language to an emphasis on the child's own use of language and its importance in the development of each individual. The growing volume of studies of language, now, and here, in its social and individual functions, together with political changes led to a move from the study of classical literature to contemporary writing, and in composition themes and topics for discussion the focus was on what was 'relevant' to the students, and a value began to be put on students' experiences, views and utterances.

What chiefly lay behind these changes was the work coming from the social sciences concerning the crucial role of language in learning - cognitive and personal and social. The effect of all this added up to a re-definition of English in terms of the personal growth of students.

These changes in direction in English teaching have different emphases in different countries. In the United States every direction can be found, though perhaps the strongest is still the skills-and-heritage model. In England the growth model is powerful, if not dominant. Western Australia, with its own different history, has been influenced by both, but with its relative freedom from public examination set syllabuses and its new-found emphasis on school-based curricula, it has the golden chance of escaping from the shroud of the ancestral model and re-define English in terms of its own students' needs.

Perhaps the most oustanding move in the direction English is taking everywhere is the growing sense that it has to serve the needs of *all* children. In the words of the International conference at York in 1971:

> 'We look ... for the re-defining of our subject in the light of the language needs of all children, and of their probable needs in a kind of society we cannot predict.'

And one factor we are constantly reminded of today is the growth of multi-racial societies and the schools in which children whose mother tongue is not English work side by side with children who are native English speakers. In this context - true for Britain today no less than for Australia - re-definitions of English are imperative. In Parts I and II of this report we deal with English now. In Part III we attempt to look forward beyond today.

WHAT IS ENGLISH?

LACK OF CONSENSUS

The debate about what English is continues. At the heart of it is a means-ends argument. Is all that goes on in English classrooms an end in itself, or a means to something else? Of course, in a broad sense, all education has its eye on the future, but to the consumers - the students - the distant horizon is seldom noticed, and what they engage in now, today, has to justify itself as the present purpose. This is the problem about the skills approach to English. You practise skills in order to be able to use them someday, but in the doing they become an end in themselves, and as ends they seem pointless, unrelated to real operations, and boring - according to statements from many interviews with students.

Using language to do things with now is in contrast to this - discussing things, writing stories, planning, reporting and commenting are activities whose purpose is justified in the act. Language is being developed by using it here and now for real operations, not 'dummy runs'. Paradoxically, in using it for real operations, it is also being 'practised'. We would argue that if we want to be true to language as it actually functions, then the skills of English are best learned through real operation.

In Part II of this report the teachers and some of the students in the case-study schools describe the kind of English they teach and learn, and various mixes of both these views will be found. We interviewed many students, English teachers, teachers of other subjects and some parents and asked them to tell us what they thought about English and English teaching. What emerged was a general agreement from all except some of the English teachers that 'English' meant language drills and exercises, including comprehension exercises. In Years 11 and 12 the students included the reading of classical novels in their notion of what English was.

The primary and lower secondary students, *when prompted,* had things to say about other *separate* activities - reading was one, drama another, and writing stories another - but these were not seen as part of English. Some teachers of English, of course, had a more coherent view of the subject, although different teachers gave a very different priority to its varying activities.

It is interesting to contrast this lack of consensus about what English is with the wide general acceptance of what, for instance, science is. There is a real problem here. Students whose mother tongue is English have already learned it when they enter school. True, they then have to learn to read it and write it, but most manage this quite effectively by the time they enter secondary school, when the *majority* can read and write as appropriately as their parents. Thus people don't see where to set their sights next. They see English as a school subject like science or social studies - subjects where it is obvious there is always a lot more to be learnt. Yet in English it is difficult to see what more there is to learn beyond making sure of the conventions of writing - spelling, punctuation and standard grammar. Most of the parents interviewed did not get beyond this point, though when prompted by the question, 'What more would you want for your children beyond correctness?', some said they would like them to read more, some said they would like them to be able to talk about adult affairs, and a number said they would like them to be happy, reasonable people!

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Yet, in fact, a language, especially the mother tongue with all its unique functions in learning, is *not* like other subjects in respect of its content. Its *raison d'être* lies in its use, and its uses are as various as the human activities. If one asks how English for students of twelve years of age differs from English for students of fifteen or seventeen years, the answer must be in the greater range and complexity of the *thinking and talking and making* that language is used for.

'What is wanted above all is a greater ability on the part of all involved in language education to *conceptualize the field as a unity* in which competence grows incrementally through the interaction of writing, talking, reading and experience. Such a conceptualization of 'English' must be meshed with strategies of teaching which are true to language as it actually functions; must be relevant to the needs of children, and to the needs and opportunities of language use in society; and must be non-discriminatory across class, dialect and cultural groups.' (Keepes *et al.*, 1977.)

How far have we got in moving towards such a unified concept of language education? In what follows we attempt to spell out the changes which suggest that such a unified view may be beginning to appear.

A CHANGING VIEW OF THE TEACHING-LEARNING RELATIONSHIP

Perhaps the most marked change in English teaching and learning is the value now given by many teachers to students' own utterances, spoken or written - utterances of their own experiences, their own thoughts and feelings expressed and accepted in their own personal formulations. And this kind of communication presumes the notion of sharing. Students have often complained that their English teachers have only been interested in *how* they have said things, not in *what* they have said. To anyone trying to communicate, it is frustrating in the extreme to find the audience is not interested in the communication itself, but only in its form; this may account for some of the widespread hostility to English.

A view of the English classroom 'as a place where students meet to share experience of some importance' (Dixon, 1967) is a significant change, and is itself part of a *changing conception of learning which gives a different meaning to teaching*. It represents a move away from the ages old transmission model of learning with the teacher as the fount of all knowledge and power towards a model based on negotiations between teachers and students.

The transmission model in its most prevailing guise is represented in the behavioural view of learning, derived from experiments with animals but applied to human beings. This gives the teacher full responsibility for what is to be learned, and how; but this view of teaching disjoins it from the processes of learning that go on continuously as a part of living - i.e. the knowledge gained from the school of experience, from random discoveries and from individual curiosity.

On the other hand, a model based on negotiations implies talking together to arrive at something agreed. James Britton uses the phrase 'shaping at the point of utterance' to connect the formulations we make in words with the 'moment by moment interpretative process by which we make sense of what is happening.' (Britton, 1970.) Intentions and understanding come together in the various acts of speech. Talk in such a learning environment is the prime mover of work in English.

Michael Halliday describes language using as a process of meaning-gathering, (Halliday, 1975) or making sense of one's experience - an active process in which what we bring is as much a part of learning as what we take. It is this view of the learner sharing in the responsibility for his own learning which is changing the conception of teaching. This shared responsibility includes taking work on, carrying it through, and to an increasing extent in English, a choice of content - books, topics, assignments. The whole business of teaching and learning English is becoming more of a collaboration between partners in a joint enterprise. Some of the partners are, of course, senior partners, but partners nevertheless, and examples of the way the partnership works are given in some of the case studies in Part II.

This is the model of English that came out of the Dartmouth Seminar. It marks an important stage in the development of the ideas of what Subject English is, because for the first time, knowledge about the nature of language and its functions in society and in the growth of individuals were constantly explored *in relation to classroom practice*. In his report of the Dartmouth conference, John Dixon says:

> 'The most fundamental aim of language is to promote interaction between people'. If we look at our human purposes in using language we find, in school as in life, the sharing of experience of all kinds is at the centre. 'Then recalling events or ideas, getting them clear, giving them shape and making connections, speculating and building theories, celebrating (or exorcising) particular moments of our lives are some of the broad purposes that language serves and enables.' It is the English teacher's responsibility to prepare for and work towards such *activities*. 'It was for this reason,' says Dixon, 'that members of the Seminar moved from an attempt to define "what English is" - a question that throws the emphasis on nouns like *skills*, and *proficiencies*, set *books* and the *heritage* - to a definition by process, a description of the activities we engage in through language.' (Dixon, 1967.)

As the ideas formulated at Dartmouth (1966) and at York (1971) and at the UNESCO seminar at Sydney (1972) have begun to penetrate into the practice of schools it is becoming clear that the changing conception of English depends on a changing conception of the teaching-learning relationship. This change in relationship goes beyond the teaching of English. Just as we are beginning to understand that our own language is a force in all learning, so we are beginning to see that, if it is to operate most powerfully, there must be room for students to use it as part of their growing responsibility for their own learning. Thus the changing relationships between teachers and students are beginning to be part of whole schools and, indeed, of school systems. Again these changing contexts for learning in a few schools are reported in Part II.

THE PLACE OF LITERATURE IN THE 'UNIVERSE OF DISCOURSE'

If we survey the English teaching scene since Dartmouth we can see that we have got quite a long way in re-defining English as a mother tongue. We understand it is for use - and is learnt by use rather than by precept. But we haven't got all that far in understanding the place of literature in this 'universe of discourse' as James Moffett called it. The members of the Dartmouth Seminar were quite clear about it: 'Literature is a significant part of personal experience and can therefore be as much part of a reader's experience as events in his own life' and as John Dixon reports, can illuminate and extend the language activities of the English classroom. Yet, in the pedagogical writing about English teaching since

Dartmouth, a myth has grown up that the 'growth model' of English takes no account of literature. Barry Smith, in an article as recently as 1977 (Eagleson and Watson, 1977), could write:

> 'Is an English teacher a person who works with poems, stories, novels and plays, or is he concerned primarily with promoting talking, writing and reading about the students' direct experiences and other areas of interest?
>
> The 'experience' approach assumes that the focal point of Subject English is language in all its uses and contexts with the activities of talking, reading and writing about topics which interest the students taking precedence over the provision of literary experience. Literary experience is relegated to the background as one of the 'voices' contributing to the 'conversation' in the classroom. In a very radical approach, literature would hardly matter at all.'

It is curious that the part of the Dartmouth programme which deals with talk and with the personal uses of language has been fairly widely assimilated into the vanguard of classroom practice and theory, whereas that part which articulates the notion of a universe of discourse in which one of the uses of language is literature - and a highly significant use - has not been assimilated; it has, in fact, been quite overlooked, so that many people think it isn't there. It is as if people feel a necessity to maintain the separateness of the two 'disciplines', language and literature, and therefore refuse to recognize that there is, in fact, a universe of discourse. After all, literature is an artifact constructed from language and a highly significant use of it.

Why is there this curious blind spot?

Partly it turns on the meaning people have come to give to the word 'experience'. Literary experience seems to be excluded from the connotation of the word, yet quite young students do not so exclude it, as the following quotation from the journal of a thirteen-year-old girl in one of our case studies shows:

> *June 2nd. My poem, 'In the Days of the Ring', does not exactly tell a story. I know why I wrote it. In a way I was trying to fathom how I felt about the book, 'The Lord of the Rings'. I also ask the questions I want to ask about it. I wish to see Galadriel and like this I also want to say what I want to hear about more - to know 'Where have all my dear friends gone?' - but are they my dear friends? In terms of reality they are nothing. They are just J.R. Tolkien's children.*

In part, the refusal to see literary experience as a part of all experience is a product of the way literature is taught in universities and therefore in schools in preparation for the examinations leading up to university entrance. The focus is on a training in discrimination and literary criticism, university teachers themselves having a heavy investment in critical studies. John Dixon wrote (Dixon, 1967):

> 'While the Seminar (which was very largely composed of university teachers) was united in the essential value of literary experiences ... it was full of doubt and dismay about prevailing approaches to the teaching of literature, not only at school level ... It is literature, not literary criticism which is the subject.'

But the problem is broader than this. We are still entangled in a view of literature as something 'out there', that other people write. This puts the focus on a 'trained élite' who aim to distinguish even among contemporary writers those who will 'last'; i.e. literature is seen as something that *has been*.

There is an alternative view which has been growing in recent years. It is a view which has arisen from studies of the various functions of language within the whole universe of discourse. James Britton develops this view and explores its implications in Chapter III of *Language and Learning*. (Britton, 1970). From this stance one of the uses (or functions) of language is to make (create) 'literature', and it can be seen to be a universal activity, not the prerogative of a few. To exemplify: everyone tells mini-stories of their own and other people's lives; many people read stories - newspapers are full of them; and millions of people watch stories on TV. Thus within the universe of discourse one can say that all story-makers and all story consumers are engaged in the same *kind* of operation, and are using language (and other means) for a similar purpose. 'Narrative,' says Barbara Hardy, 'is a primary act of mind transferred to Art from Life.' (Hardy, 1977.) This is NOT to say that all stories are equally valuable. This is where experience of reading and discrimination come in, but they come in on a broader scenario in which a student's writing appears as of the same *kind* as that of an established writer, although its quality may be very different. And it needs to be recognized that in the contemporary world the medium of literature is not only print but also TV and film.

Of course, the functions of literature itself are various. Much that is written (and read and watched) are collective day-dreams and satisfy because they confirm current attitudes and beliefs. Other writing provides fantasy worlds which keep the real world at bay for a time; and yet other writing genuinely explores the boundaries of human behaviour and enlarges our understanding of the possibilities of life. Inevitably we see the third kind of writing as being superior, and there is a real place for criticism in attempting to see which writers are doing what (and which writers are not doing any of these things but using writing to serve non-literary ends such as advertising or pornography). Perhaps new critics considering literature in its role in society may be able to recognize these various functions of literature and see their relationship to human needs.

A number of writers have explored a functional view of literature. D.W. Harding in *The Role of the Onlooker* (1936) and *Psychological Processes in the Reading of Fiction* (1962) considers the social function of literature; James Britton developed the idea of the significance in a person's life of the role of the 'spectator' - in short, of literature; and James Moffett in *Teaching the Universe of Discourse* has powerful things to say about the nature of writing in the 'mythic' mode as distinct from the expository mode, especially for children.

It is surely time we began to pay more attention to these (and other) writers and to explore the implications of what they say for the place of literature in schools. It seems as if the fact that they have dared to place literature within a context of language as a whole has made us deaf to what they are saying about the universality and centrality of literature.

RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

For many years the notion of the 'right response' has dominated literature teaching. This, of course, is first cousin to 'getting the answer right' in other subjects. 'The right response' includes not only 'right' meanings but also preferring those works at the top of the hierarchy. This view of response ignores the active, creative power which is naturally as much a part of the process of reading as it is of writing. We have noted that in writing in schools this active, creative power is beginning to be recognized, but in reading it is still straight-jacketed by the notion that there is a one-to-one relationship between the quality of the literature and the reader's response to it. This is an over-simple, mechanistic view. In fact, as we can learn from tape recordings of students discussing poems and stories, or from what they occasionally write about them, they can bring empathy, sensitivity and relevant experience to bear on all sorts of literary items - good, bad and indifferent - which are transformed by active creative power into items of significance for them. To illustrate, here is a quotation from a boy of twelve writing about poems that he liked:

> *What a picture I get from the second last verse of Robert Southey's poem 'The Inchape Rock'. Sir Ralph the Rover is sailing home with a ship full of treasure with no thought of danger now that his perilous voyage is over when suddenly,*
>
> *They hear no sound, the swell is strong;*
> *Though the wind hath fallen they drift along,*
> *Till the vessel strikes with a shivering shock,*
> *'O Christ it is the Inchape Rock'.*
>
> *No prose could express so well the anguish of the man who knew he was doomed and by his own folly in removing the warning bell from the rock. That verse shows me him tearing his hair, running frantically up and down giving orders, but it is to no avail and his ship sinks slowly but surely until at last only the bow sticks out of the water. Then even that disappears and only a few bubbles remain on the surface.*

Surely we would not dismiss this response as spurious because we might be inclined to dismiss Southey's ballad as spurious? To quote James Britton again: 'These unsophisticated responses are the stuff from which, with refinement and development, literary responses are made' (Britton, 1968.) We may expect children's tastes to broaden with experience of reading; what seems to be needed is joint negotiation of what is read in school, and mutual respect for differing tastes.

LITERATURE IN INTEGRATED STUDIES

Part of the core curriculum that schools provide is in humanities, more often called social studies. Broadly this study is concerned with man in his physical and cultural environment, past and present. If we think in terms of separate disciplines - or subjects - this means geography, English, history, and sometimes sociology and philosophy. Since school systems are dominated by matter to be learned for examination tests the notion of the educative value of the humanities is little more than a wraith hovering behind the programmes. Few will see history either as the march of progress or (as Gibbon saw it) 'as a register of the crimes and follies and misfortunes of mankind'; or literature as a transmitter of cultural values through its imagined representations of the possibilities of life. Yet here and there it does work in this way.

An upper school student responding to an invitation from the London Writing Research team to reflect on the way he writes in his two main subjects, English and history, said:

> *The two main subjects for which I write are History and English Literature. I enjoy English more as a subject, but I find writing for History somewhat easier. English essays demand an organization of ideas which is also necessary in History, but the difference is that ideas in English often have to do with verbalizing feelings, while History essays deal with what you think. English demands a rigorous examination of your own reaction to a novel or poem, while in History the difficulty is not so much the formulation of ideas as the marshalling of facts, and the clarification of notions which you had all along. It is because English is more to do with the non-cerebral part of your mind that it is more difficult to write about and more satisfying at the same time. History essays may be slightly easier (though often the marshalling of facts is just drudgery), but they are less satisfying, indeed, the age-old story of human failure is often downright depressing ... the sense of achievement (in English essays) is greater because the transference of ideas from the inexplicit (or implicit) to the explicit, intellectual, and cerebral part of the mind is such a difficult, and time-consuming process. (Quoted in Dixon and Gill, 1977.)*

It is one of the intentions of integrated programmes that the different fields of study should illuminate each other in the way they have for this student, but there are special problems for English in these combined studies, and much confusion.

To identify these problems: firstly, English is the medium in which other subjects are conducted so the practical matters of reading and writing in these studies is - quite rightly - seen as an aspect of English which is fulfilled 'across the curriculum'. But this is not the sum total of English, though it is often thought to be so by students, parents and many teachers. (See the first part of this section, 'Lack of Consensus'.) One student said in an interview, 'We don't do English anymore; we do social studies'. The use of English to articulate a field of public knowledge (social studies) is only one of its functions. There is also the whole area of a student's response to broader aspects of experience - aspects that belong to his life as an individual and that should find expression in views he may hold, in poems he may write, or events he may feel moved to reflect on. These can't be predicted or provided for within the syllabus of a set programme, and are therefore a particular responsibility of teachers of English. What happens (often) to these uses of language within the social studies framework? Regrettably they are lost, and their loss diminishes a significant area of personal growth.

Writing is important for the articulation of personal as well as public knowledge. To quote from our case studies, a 17-year-old student said:

> *I often used my writing as a thought-formulating process ... It helped me to understand myself and my place in life ... In a very indirect way this better understanding of myself helped me to develop an identity and gain confidence in myself as an individual.*

And another said:

> *... The most outstanding value gained for me was that I became more aware of the outside world.*

Two documentations from students of the importance to them of personal writing - but how do they fit into a social studies programme?

Secondly, there is the question of literature. Within the social studies framework literature tends to be selected for its usefulness in illustrating something else, i.e. the topics of the course. Moreover, these illustrations are, too often, short excerpts pulled out of stories or novels or even poems. Such extracts can be illuminating; they are usually better written than textbooks, but in the context of integrated programmes they are deficient - and dangerous - in regard to literature because they come to be regarded by teachers as fulfilling the literature component in the programme, and by students as being chunks of social studies reading matter - which is, in fact, what they have become. A story is an end in itself; when it is made to serve some other end, its function changes.

Furthermore, the form of a work of literature is part of its meaning. Excerpts inevitably diminish its meaning, and when used as illustrations of something else, may distort or destroy its essence. For instance, the verse of Southey's poem quoted above in the context of an argument makes a telling point in the argument, but it gives us no experience of the poem.

Even when circumstances are more favourable - when, for instance, all the teachers in a humanities course plan a programme which includes whole works of literature relevant to the programme, there is still some loss in literary experience, though the English teachers may consider that this loss is compensated for by the gains of an integrated course. This loss is to do with the unpredictability of how literature works for people. The power of stories and poems to 'speak' to people lies partly in how they relate here and now to aspects of individual lives. Texts chosen in accordance with a social studies course may or may not work in this way. If they do, it is probably a happy accident, since the destinations and starting points are different. A social studies course starts from a designated *topic;* English teachers set about choosing books in all sorts of ways, but apart from constraints such as prescribed texts or the availability of books in the school, it is probably true to say that their starting-point is likely to be the particular *students* they are planning for. They think about such things as the levels of maturity of their students, their experience of reading and to some extent their individual tastes. Sometimes they think students ought to encounter some of the work of a particular writer; sometimes they discuss with their students what writers or what books they would like to read; sometimes they too start from a topic, but particularly, many English teachers try to keep open the ways in which literature can interact with daily life. To take an unusually dramatic example, Gwyn came into his primary school one day and said to his teacher, 'Me cat died, Miss. Can you help me find a story about a cat, Miss? When you read something it kinda helps you sort it out in your mind.' (Martin, 1976.) These various ways of selecting literature will not fit easily into a social studies programme.

Then there is the matter of a different destination. The purposes of literature in a social studies course is necessarily didactic, to illuminate a topic in some way. Literature has no such transactional purpose:

> 'For poetry makes nothing happen; it survives
> In the valley of its saying where executives
> Would never want to tamper' (Auden, 1950)

Yet all these problems could be overcome if the different nature of the different humanities were recognized. *Ad hoc* arrangements can be legislated for. The problem lies more in the confusion about the multiple roles of English - maid of all work, instrument of thought, creator of works of imagination. Because of its scope it is the core of the humanities, but it needs to be given that scope; and since its handmaidenly and instrumental roles are included in the other humanities, literature (and its corollary, personal writing) is the unique contribution of subject English. It may be possible for students to say they don't do English in such a programme; it should not be possible for them to say they don't do literature.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LANGUAGE

We have considered first what we think are the central aspects of English teaching and learning, but there are other matters which are also a part of English. We have emphasized the importance of the *use* of language for real operations, but there is also the question of how much we want our pupils to *study* it - that is, what knowledge *about* language will help them to use it more effectively for all the multifarious purposes of living? It must be said, loud and clear, that the answer to this question is not known yet. The only experience of using it for many purposes, but this is not the same question; we are now asking what knowledge *about* language is useful?

If we tried to make a 'map' representing what goes on in English lessons and plotted the various activities, we should be likely to find three kinds of things going on - *using* language; *practising* it and *studying* it.

Using it would include all sorts of purposeful activities on the part of the user - conversations, arguments, speeches, drama, reports, essays, stories, poems and many more.

Practising it would include all the various exercises which are supposed to make people better able to use it when it comes to real purposes (like practising backhand strokes in tennis). Since everyone has at some time used these exercises - for class control if for nothing else - there is no need to itemize them here. However, practising also includes what we might call 'practice-play' - i.e. language games of all sorts, pig-Latin for instance, or rhyming slang, writing the most dramatic opening sentence for a story, writing limericks, or vignettes of known characters and so on. This kind of 'practice-play' involves discussion and is nearer to *ad hoc* study of stories than it is to standard language exercises requiring a right answer.

Studying language, in one of its forms, involves halting the process of using it and standing aside, as it were, to observe what has been going on - transferring one's attention from the meaning to items in the utterance. The features of language that are observed may be to do with grammar or stylistics or word meanings or customary usage or dialect, etc., etc. They may be discussed and related to their context or to general ideas about language, and then left, as attention is shifted back to using language for the purpose (whatever it was) that was interrupted by this excursion into studying language. This level of study we would call *ad hoc*, and it most frequently arises, as yet, in connection with reading and discussing literature.

At a further level, study of language may involve drawing scattered observations into a systematic frame of reference. The only systematic work on language traditionally undertaken in schools has been grammatical and it must be bluntly stated that this work has not been 'study' in any real sense of the word because the system (grammar) has been taught prescriptively without any real observation or examination (Elley, 1975). This so-called study of grammar was undertaken because it was believed that it was a necessary part of writing and speaking the standard dialect.

The available evidence (and there is a lot of it) goes to show that learning the grammar of English as a mother tongue does not at all affect the use of it. Elley says, 'Indeed, 60 years of empirical studies on the practical value of teaching grammar have failed to demonstrate any consistent measurable effects on the students' writing skills.' It seems to be modified from other sources. For this reason the systematic teaching of grammar can hardly be justified as a part of core English today. There has, however, been a small but significant change towards a non-prescriptive study of language, chiefly as the result of Halliday's *Linguistics and English Teaching Project* and its publications (Doughty *et al.*, 1971). An example will make clear these new directions.

A teacher in England taped a discussion with a class of seventeen-year-old students whose day-to-day speech was strongly regional. He then transcribed the tape and presented the students with a typewritten transcript and asked them to consider the main differences between the 'writing' in front of them (the transcription of their speech) and the 'normal' English of the written work in their folders. He was, in fact, giving them some field work on the differences between spoken and written English in two very different contexts. This resulted first in shock. The first student to speak said, 'It's not English!' They had not been even faintly aware of the differences between their spoken and written language. When the numbing effect had worn off there was a lively discussion about language - spoken and written - with actual samples there in front of them to examine and reflect on.

The students had concluded that language was a kind of public property ready to be used for private as well as public purposes. Their own regional speech was perfectly acceptable in many contexts; in other,more public contexts it was not so. But both purposes are part of English. Students will later need to take on a wide range of tasks and responsibilities in the community involving being able to give explanations and verbal reports, participate in meetings, offer points of view, make requests, give instructions, compile reports, give advice, issue notices ... Many of these could be realistic tasks in school, where they can learn to do these things in a publicly acceptable form. *They need to know and be concerned about the conventions of public presentation,* but only as their sense of a real or potential audience develops will this concern become realistic.

This aspect of English is accentuated by the increasing number of multi-racial classrooms. More and more students whose mother tongue is not English are wanting to learn 'correct' English, so there is a pressure within society itself which is not just a matter of social class.

The question of what knowledge about a mother tongue is useful in developing competence in it is perhaps one of the growing points in contemporary English studies. Awareness of the part language plays in learning and its power as a social force is bringing language study back into the school orbit at a different level. Some systematic studies of language are now optional courses for older school students in the U.S.A. and U.K.

So much, then, for our 'map' of activities in English. Teachers, individually or collectively, will make their own priorities within it. Some will give more weight to experience of using language for all sorts of purposes and audiences; others pin their faith in chunks of practice; others do a good deal of *ad hoc* study connected with writing and with literature. Probably most will want to spread their resources to include all three kinds of activity but, in making their priorities and planning their programmes, English teachers will want to take account of the levels and consequent needs of each different class.

LANGUAGE ACROSS THE CURRICULUM (Martin, *et al.*, 1976)

Schools are much concerned with information and ideas, and the chief medium in which these exist is language. Of course, what is new information for one individual is established knowledge for others. For something to be known it must be brought to life afresh in every knower; and unless we are given the opportunity to reconstrue and to assimilate gradually what is new, the information will remain inert - a scatter of facts which have no real significance to us because they have not taken shape within our understanding.

One of the side effects of the drive for literacy has been the obscuring of this fact. Reading and writing are not enough. The crucial element in the way we represent knowledge to ourselves is our own formulations - our own words. What we do when we formulate and reflect is to interpret the new information in terms of our own previous knowledge and experience, i.e. we 'understand' it. We therefore *bring* as much to as we *take* from what we are learning; and what we bring is necessarily in our own language. This is the role of talk and personal writing. Without them the process of reconstructing new information is much attenuated.

It follows that all teachers need to survey what goes on in their classrooms and consider whether they have built space and time for the learners' use of language to play its part in what they are teaching; to ask themselves what opportunities they have made for their students to use the basic means of assimilation - talk and reflection and hypothesizing. This is what the rather obscure shorthand cliché 'language across the curriculum' is about. It is *not* about a drive on spelling and punctuation, because teachers have always been concerned about the presentation of written work. In effect it is about teachers creating classroom procedures so that language can work as an instrument of learning for the students - which is something very different.

In what sense is this a matter for teachers of English, since it appears that language development is becoming an aspect of the whole curriculum? The notion of a universe of discourse is helpful here. All teachers have responsibility for parts of it, but, as we have argued earlier, English teachers have particular responsibility for personal writing and literature. We would now add two more areas of responsibility for them - one to students, and one to colleagues who teach other subjects.

Students they can help by giving them a genuine understanding of the various functions of language - help them to see that language is not all of a kind and to adapt the ways they talk and write according to different communicative purposes.

They can help their colleagues by initiating discussion about the role of the mother tongue in various fields of learning. Clearly it is not the same in foreign language learning, for instance, as it is in science or social studies; such discussion leads on to the collective development of a policy for language in the school. This may take many forms; co-operation in sustained silent reading schemes is just one example.

Strictly speaking, there is no reason why this latter responsibility belongs to English teachers; it is a matter of concern for all teachers. But in fact, English teachers have, in many cases, given a lead in these directions because their field of expertise is language, and they have been more immediately alerted to the significance of language in learning.

TOWARDS A UNIFYING THEORY OF ENGLISH

In attempting to see how far we have got in moving towards a unified concept of English it is helpful to look back at John Dixon's review of the scene in the opening chapter of *Growth through English* (Dixon, 1967 and 1975). He writes:

> Among the models or images of English that have been widely accepted on both sides of the Atlantic, three were singled out. The first centred on *skills;* it fitted an era when *initial* literacy was the prime demand. The second stressed the *cultural heritage,* the need for a civilizing and socially unifying content. The third (and current) model focuses on *personal growth;* on the need to re-examine the learning processes and the meaning to the individual of what he is doing in English lessons. Looking back over the history of our subject, we see the limitations of the earlier models and thus the need to re-interpret our conception of 'skills' and 'heritage'.

Twelve years later we can see that such re-interpretation is still in its infancy, but there are signs that what he calls the 'growth' model is being extended and modified in three directions.

Firstly, there is the general notion of the importance of language in learning. In its practice this has been referred to as 'language across the curriculum'. This is a matter for all teachers to be concerned with. This general notion has been given coherence by the map of varieties of discourse provided by the London Writing Research Unit and described in James Britton's *Language and Learning*. This notion provides a frame of reference from which to survey the varying functions of language and make decisions about who does what with regard to different parts of the 'universe'. These general concepts about language make it possible for the confusing variety of English activities to be drawn together within a unifying theory of language in education.

Secondly, the fact that multi-racial classrooms are everywhere now is, directly and indirectly, affecting attitudes and practice. We are slowly beginning to recognize the significance to us of other cultures than our own, and this in turn is affecting the basis of our attitudes towards standard English, dialects, and the speech of immigrants.

Thirdly, there is the shift in classroom procedures towards workshops and field studies, i.e. a move from teacher instruction and student note-taking towards a conception of the importance of first-hand experience in learning. This places a focus and value on students' own experience, views and language. In English, which is centrally concerned with talking, reading and writing, this new focus turns the work towards individual response to literature on the one hand, and on the other towards the growth and extension of individual language rather than the acquiring of an external mode of public language.

Probably the most useful part of our attempt to show what English is today will be in the implications for work in schools. These implications are drawn out in Part III from the problems and some of the solutions to them which appear in the case studies.

SUMMARY

The lack of consensus about what English is.

The need for a unified conception of English.

Changes in the teaching-learning relationship produce a changing notion of learning which, in turn, gives a different meaning to teaching.

The idea that literature exists within 'a universe of discourse' is not generally recognized. Reasons for this:

> There is not a one-to-one relationship between the quality of literature and the quality of response to it.
>
> English in integrated studies; different starting points and needs.
>
> Knowledge *about* language; studying language.
>
> What a 'map' of English activities would show.
>
> Language across the curriculum; a responsibility of all teachers.
>
> Towards a unifying theory for English; three developments:
>
> (1) Growth of general concepts about language in learning and of a universe of discourse with differing responsibilities within it.
>
> (2) The effects of multi-racial classrooms.
>
> (3) The effects of shifts in classroom procedures towards workshops, field studies and individual learning.

PART II—CASE STUDIES

PREAMBLE

It is important to say that the case studies are not a random sample of schools, and therefore generalizations cannot be made from them. The study as a whole was designed to examine the conditions in which English teaching and learning in its many aspects seems to flourish best. What each case study says is, 'This is what English was like in this school where these features - or those - were strong elements in the school environment.'

For this reason the case-study schools were selected to include the differences listed in the design of the study as 'school variables'. Each of these applied to a number of schools, so we might have made our final selection randomly within these categories. Instead we selected schools where these contrastive features were sharpest, and where, therefore, we might expect their influence on English to be more clearly perceivable. For instance, we chose Case-Study School No. 6 out of a number of metropolitan senior high schools with mixed socio-economic background because it was said to have developed particularly strong links with its community. Similarly we selected Case-Study School No. 5 as a senior high school with a low socio-economic background and a strong development towards school-based curricula in English, and Case-Study School No. 4 as a senior high school with a relatively high socio-economic background and a focus on externally mandated syllabuses and programmes. Only in the case of School No. 3 did we include a factor additional to those listed as school variables. This school was chosen out of the half dozen or so that fulfilled our criteria of rural schools far distant from Perth and with a high proportion of Aboriginal students (70%?) because it was thought to have changed a great deal in the four years since the Aboriginal Education Branch was established. It seemed appropriate to invite this school to be a case study in order to try to see what these changes might mean in terms of literacy, and whatever 'English' meant in this educational community.

Starting as we did, with the intention of studying the effect of certain predicted variables in the school environment, we had to be alert to *unpredicted* things; to enquire *beyond* the range of our predictions for things going on which might be influential for English.

Although the case studies are presented as far as possible in the words of the school participants with the aim of representing what it was like to be teaching or learning English in that particular school, various kinds of selectiveness were inevitable. For instance, the teachers decided who would work with us; these were likely to be from the most committed teachers. The parents we saw were those already interested enough to be available. Of the students, if they offered themselves, it was those who felt capable; and if chosen by the teacher, the same sort of selection was at work - they were thought to be capable. With regard to the interviews, we cannot print whole transcripts, so we ourselves have inevitably been selective in our editing. These are facts of human interaction. Our study recognized them in its design and made them explicit in its method of reporting.

Moreover, we recognized that what we should see and listen to would be the *best* that teachers could do - or think. There would certainly be an obverse side to the coin, but since our aim was not to assess individual teachers or schools, but to understand the meaning of the various behaviours we encountered, it was of particular importance to try to see what were the conditions in which the best work in English came about. For this reason the *general* features in the contexts for English teaching were important. How supportive, for instance, was the environment for new or junior teachers? How were uncommitted teachers drawn into a greater commitment? Or weren't they? The significance of these general contextual features are discussed in Part III.

ABSTRACTS: CASE-STUDY SCHOOLS

Case Study 1

This school is a Class II district high school. The main features identified here were the size (up to 200 students), the isolation of the school, the insularity of the community, and the low incomes and relatively low level of aspiration of both students and parents.

Case Study 2

This school is a small country senior high school in a relatively stable and affluent farming community. The school was also involved in the development and implementation of the first alternative English course approved for the Certificate of Secondary Education for its agricultural students. The focus of the study is on the alternative English course.

Case Study 3

This school was chosen on the criteria of size (large district high school), multi-racial population (large percentage of Aboriginal students) and isolation. The population of the local community was also highly transient (approximately one-third change-over every three years). The school was also chosen to study the influence of the Aboriginal Education Branch on the learning environment in the school.

Case Study 4

This school is a small metropolitan senior high school in a relatively high socio-economic area. The school was also tightly structured at English department and administration levels, and was known to rely heavily on externally mandated syllabuses and programmes. The focus of the study is on the effect of examinations and assessments on the teaching and learning of English.

Case Study 5

This school was chosen because it is a large metropolitan senior high school in a relatively low socio-economic area. It was also known to place considerable emphasis on school-based curriculum development, and to have had sufficient stability of staffing to develop and sustain innovations. The focus of the study is on the adaption of work to student needs.

Case Study 6

This school was selected because it was a faculty design building, and had taken mature-age students into the normal school programme. There was a deliberate policy of fostering community contacts through the large work-experience programme, making the school available as a community resource, co-ordinating farm studies and music with local primary schools and, eventually, planning to provide education from kindergarten to mature-age students.

Special Innovation School 1

This school is a large country senior high school, and was chosen because it was known that a community education centre had been established through the Schools Commission. A special innovations project on talk and expressive writing was operating from Kindergarten to Year 12 across different subject areas in ten local schools.

Special Innovation School 2

This school is a large metropolitan senior high school in a low socio-economic area, with a high unemployment rate, many single-parent families, and many students who feel that school has little to offer them. The focus in this study is on the alternative course, which aimed at re-socializing alienated students, rather than having a prevocational slant.

Special Innovation School 3

This school is a metropolitan high school, established by the Education Department as an experimental school. Innovations were made in terms of a flexi-space architectural design, staffing by application, time-tabling in one-hundred-minute zones, a policy of joint decision-making within the school and school-based curriculum development.

CLASSIFICATION OF SCHOOLS

In accordance with Education Department Regulations, secondary schools may be established and classified in the following ways:

Reg. 180 (1) The Minister may establish a high or senior high school in any locality where there is a reasonable prospect of average attendance of not less than 150 children in Years 8, 9 and 10.

(2) A school may be declared a 'special school' if, in the opinion of the Director-General, it carries special additional responsibilities.

Reg. 180A (1) A school which has an average daily enrolment over 150 primary and secondary pupils, of whom at least 25 are following a secondary course of study, may be declared a district high school if the Director-General thinks fit.

Subject to the above regulation, district high schools may be classified as follows:

Class I : Schools having an average daily enrolment of over 300 students.

Class II : Schools having an average daily enrolment of over 150 students.

CASE STUDY 1—CLASS II DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

REASONS FOR SELECTION

This school was selected as a case study because it is a small Class II District High School, and relatively isolated. There are approximately 55 students in Years 8-10 in the school. Of the Year 10 group, approximately 60% go on to Year 11 at a senior high school 32 kilometres away.

INFLUENCE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

In an interview, the Principal described the effect of the local community in this way:

> *Most of the families that live in the town are associated with the mill (timber mill). The mill is in a particularly bad situation at the present moment, with the economic climate that is running through Australia. There have been quite a number of people dismissed over the last month, with the result that one particular family that had three or four children here at the school had to move to another location. The town has no cultural centres at all, except they have a club and a hotel; the families gravitate between here and W——— Harbour (a fishing-spot 56 km down the road). For those who are lucky enough to have some sort of shack down there, they spend the week-end there. As I said before, there are some families who have never been to Perth (approx. 314 km). Every year, to try and offset this, we organize a Year 10 trip. Last year, we sent them up to the Pilbara region. This year we got permission from the Director-General to send them over to South Australia, to just give them some idea of what Australia is all about and give them some concept of its size. They can look at a map and think yes, it is a big country, but they don't really understand, especially as those who are located here don't move out of it.*

As well as having a very restricted community, many of the families are in extremely limited financial circumstances, as indicated by a couple of cases quoted by the Principal. In the case of very large families, the breadwinner used to work two shifts in order to make ends meet financially, but with the rising unemployment rate, that is no longer possible. Working two shifts also meant that the father had virtually no contact with the family. Most of the houses in the town are supplied by the mill at relatively low rates (average rental about $8.00 per week). Although rentals are fairly low, food and petrol costs are relatively high, and if something goes wrong (such as the car or hot-water system breaking down) it is a real ordeal for a family to survive on a take-home pay of $130 per week.

Apart from the difficult financial situation of many families, employment for Year 10 students finishing school is very scarce, as the Principal pointed out:

> *There was quite a bit of mobility when I first arrived down here, but I think now that the mill has discarded those it doesn't want, and because of the economic climate, if they move, the chances of them being re-employed are very low. There has been a sudden settling-down of our movement (that is, movement of families, and*

> *therefore children transferring in and out of school), and now those who have got a job hold on to it, and they hold on to it very tightly. And this is one of our problems with your Year 10s coming out. They are being virtually forced to go on to Year 11, even if they want to leave school, because there's nothing available for them.*

These socio-economic conditions give rise to certain limitations. The parents and children have low expectations, and there is little finance available for broadening the children's horizons before they leave school at the end of Year 10.

Similar comments were made by the English teacher:

> *There are limiting factors within this type of town. I find that children who come from a background where their parents have control over them and they are interested in expanding their attitudes and ideas, the children are no trouble. Where the parents have a limited attitude, it's very hard to break it down. It's very hard to expand their ideas. By the time they're in high school their ideas are fairly set. Even subconsciously, they echo their parents thoughts. They might not be willing to agree with what their parents think, but they do subconsciously echo the attitudes of the town and of their ideas... You're battling against these prejudices, these set ideas, and I find this an extremely limiting factor... (People) weren't exposed much to outside influences and I think this is typical of a lot of small mill towns. It is changing, but slowly.*

The teacher saw part of the function of English teaching as a process of widening the experience, and broadening the minds of her students:

> *I'd also like to be able to think that they could look more critically at things they see, to be able to widen their horizons... the thing I say to them is, if I teach you nothing else, I hope I've broadened your experience; I hope I have opened your minds, because I think there's nothing worse than a closed mind.*

VIEWS OF THE ENGLISH TEACHER

In this school, because of its size, there is only one teacher of English at the secondary level. In her self-description, the teacher summarized her attitudes to English teaching in the following way:

(1) Influences on me as an English teacher

The whole of my life has been an accumulation of experiences and ideas, and I find that my ideas are shaped and changed in a variety of ways:

- By my parents' love of books and literature which first stimulated my interest in English.
- By my own life experiences, reflected in discussions with students, especially in encouraging them to write.
- By Departmental policies and programmes, and suggestions made by various superintendents, advisory teachers and principals.
- More recently, by the needs of the students in my school. Special considerations here have been the lack of reading

material in the homes, the lack of background and interest in English and literature, and the fact that many students will leave school at the end of the year to seek local employment. No matter what I feel personally about the importance of creative writing, I feel duty bound to concentrate a lot on practical English, so I try to balance the two.

(2) Beliefs which influence my teaching

- I consider children learn through being exposed to a variety of experiences. They must want to learn - there must be a desire to do so. In high school, sometimes, this desire to learn is blunted through lack of interest, outside pressures and failure. I cannot overcome their family backgrounds or outside pressures, but I try to create an atmosphere conducive to English language development through various ways.

- Language development is begun at birth through people communicating with the child in some way. Children must be exposed to a wide variety of experiences for them to develop language fully.

- Literature, to me, is a reflection of our culture and an accumulation of the development of our people. It is important for each person to be able to see something from another person's point of view. If the literary material is of a high order it must necessarily open up a new world for the reader. Literature should help develop tolerance and understanding and give the reader an insight into a different time or lifestyle. It also may help the readers or listeners to understand themselves better.

- Group discussions are important. Students will loosen up and talk freely when in small groups, whereas they may be embarrassed in the whole-class situation. When my classes begin work in small groups, I frequently make an excuse to leave the room, which gives them more freedom to talk.

(3) The 'use' and 'study' of English

I give greater emphasis to *using English*. I do give exercises in usage, analysis of texts and literary criticisms on occasions. I tend to 'play it by ear'. Perhaps I tend more towards extra *study of English* towards the end of Year 10 because of those who may go on to Years 11 and 12.

(4) Grading and assessment

I think grading and assessment of students work tends to kill their enthusiasm and creativity. They seem so willing to please in Year 8, but the inevitable assessments and placements seem to decrease the confidence of the less able students. I can't see a way around it. Each term they must be graded for their reports and at the end of the year for the Board of Secondary Education. I don't mark everything but most of it. I think students expect a mark. This may only be conditioning. I may be conditioned too.

It worries me that I have to decide at the end of the year what level to put a child in, and send it in to the Board. I used to grade students at the end of first term. I avoid it now; I refuse to grade them at all in Year 8, until the end of the year. I hate doing it because as soon as you put somebody in basic level their expectations drop. There's a change in their attitude.

> The awareness of students' levels is always there. Perhaps slightly unfairly, I can tell where they're going and what levels they're going to be at. Only occasionally will a student surprise me. I'm conscious of it, and when I mark I do consciously think, 'Right, this is a Basic student or Intermediate.' I know my expectations to that level.

(5) Professional freedom

> As an English teacher, I value most the freedom of choice - freedom to use the curriculum, but freedom of choice of material. I think I have reasonable experience not to use unsuitable material or books. Perhaps this could be difficult for some people, but I feel I would never choose books that I wouldn't allow my own children to read. Definitely, I want freedom of choice of material, and the way I would like to use it, and the areas I would like to cover. I would not like to have, as we did in the past, one period of this, one period of grammar, one of written expression, one of comprehension, as when I first came back to school. There was a set amount - even my poems and stories were chosen for me. I hated that.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

The concern for stimulating the student's minds and for activating their imaginations that the teacher expressed in her own comments was reflected in her English room. The available display space was used for students' own work from English, social studies and art, as well as for posters and photographs related to the themes on which students were working. Beginnings had been made on a classroom library, with a variety of books readily available to students, although lack of shelving was a handicap. Green plants were dotted about on shelves and the tops of cupboards.

In one of the lessons observed, Year 8 students were working on the theme. 'Birds, Beasts and Fishes'. The class went to the audio-visual room to watch a film about cats. Before the film was shown, there was some discussion of previous lessons and films and the students were asked to listen for descriptive words related to colour, shape, movement, characteristics, and for comparisons or similes in the film commentary. When the class returned to their room, the whole class took part in discussion, building a blackboarded list of words to describe cats, exploring the meaning of new words as they went. The teacher worked to relate the discussion to the experiences of the students, making comments such as 'like the cat you found up the rubbish dump, Jenny.'

The shyness of the students and their reluctance to talk in front of strangers was evident in this lesson. The responses to the students tended to be monosyllabic, and the teacher had to work very hard to get any expanded utterance from the students. Afterwards, the teacher admitted that the lesson had been very strained, and that usually the students were far more bubbly and forthcoming.

In the writing phase of the lesson the students were encouraged to jot down associated ideas and images, and make a rough copy. There was a break for sharing (on a voluntary basis) what had been written, before working towards a final draft.

From the lessons observed, and from the writing in students' files, it was evident that students were usually asked to write about things within the range of their own experience.

PARTICULAR FEATURES OF ENGLISH IN THIS SCHOOL

The most striking feature about the teaching of English in this school was the proportion of continuous writing as opposed to exercises, a feature which was evident in the students' files. Although it was not possible to examine the files of all secondary students, a count of the number of pages of continuous writing and the number of pages of exercises was done for Year 8 students. These students did two pages of continuous writing for every three pages of exercises. Although this indicates considerably more writing time devoted to exercises rather than pieces of continuous writing, this school had the highest proportion of continuous writing among the case-study schools.

There were also conscious attempts in the school to widen the audiences for the children's writing. The Year 7 teacher produced a school magazine in which every child in the school had something published. The same teacher encouraged his students to write novels. These were typed by the parents, with cover designs and illustrations by the students, then bound and catalogued in the library for everyone to read.

Interviewer: *Do you like English?*

Student A: *Oh, it's all right. I like writing stories better than putting in, you know, English, real English.*

Interviewer: *I thought what you were doing is English.*

Student B: *Oh, putting in full stops and exclamation marks and ... shortening sentences with er ... it's awful.*

Interviewer: *That's real English, is it?*

Student A: *Really boring...*

Interviewer: *And unreal English is writing stories?*

Students A & B: *Yeh, that's right.*

Student C: *I enjoy, you know, writing stories, because they just make you er ... I just enjoy writing stories. I reckon it's good.*

Interviewer: *Theresa ... you were doing illustrations for yours, I think, weren't you? Have you done the chapters?*

Theresa: *Yeh.*

Interviewer: *What are your chapters about?*

Theresa: *About the circus.*

Interviewer: *Yes, on the circus. Do you enjoy writing?*

Lee-Ann: *I do. I reckon it's good.*

Interviewer: *What did you write about?*

Lee-Ann: *Canoeing down a river.*

Interviewer: *Real, or imagined?*

Lee-Ann: *Oh, imagined ... I've seen people do it, you know, before ... they came to our place and they canoed down the river next to our place ... so I thought I'd write about it.*

Interviewer: *And what about you, Theresa? Have you seen a circus or was it imagined?*

Theresa: *Imagined.*

A deliberate attempt is also made in the school to improve the reading levels of students. As well as part-time remedial reading teacher, the support teacher works in class with other teachers. The school has a variable speed reading machine, and is hoping to persuade the Regional Education Office to buy the full set of film-strips for use within the Region. The students interviewed were aware of a relationship between reading books (as opposed to reading comprehension exercises) and the development of their own abilities to write:

Interviewer: *Do you read books on your own, at home...?*

Theresa: *Oh, yeh.*

Andrew: *I don't read lots, but you know, just...*

Lee-Ann: *I like reading books a lot. I read all the time.*

Interviewer: *What good do you think they do you?*

Lee-Ann: *Umm... I reckon it helps you to write stories easier, because its got certain phrases you can remember from books that you can put in your stories. Things like that...*

Interviewer: *What do you think... do you think it's useful to you, what you're doing? What use do you think it is?*

Lee-Ann: *Yes, because, you know, you could even be a author when you grow up.*

Interviewer: *Yes, you never know, when you're older. About how old are you - twelve? Twelve, so you don't really know what you are going to be, do you? What else might be useful about English?*

Andrew: *It helps you to learn how to write - write letters and all that so that when you grow... like, somebody last Friday, um... whatever they call it... a reference, or something like that, and you can write references out, apply for jobs, because you know if you are going to be an accountant or anything like that, or something to do with writing, they usually - they don't take someone with scrappy writing, so that it's good for your writing.*

Theresa: *The way we learnt this year up north, where the teacher used to be at Point Cook - we wrote a letter to them and they wrote one back or they wrote to us first, and we wrote back to them.*

Conscious efforts are also made to broaden the experience of the students. Annual trips to other parts of the country are arranged for Year 10 students. The video cassette recorder was purchased for the purpose of recording educational programmes through a nearby school. (Television reception in the district is too poor to make quality recordings in their own school.) One of the difficulties experienced here is that, if the machine breaks down for any reason, it can take over six months to repair.

PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE ON ENGLISH IN SCHOOL

Four parents who were working in the school canteen were interviewed, without any previous warning. Between them, these parents had students between Years 1 and 10 in the school, and one parent had a daughter who had left the school to go on to Year 11 in a neighbouring town. At first the parents were quite hesitant, and seemed uncertain about what English in schools was about.

Parent D: *What actually is the English as they learn it today?*

Parent B: *Well, English, you know, it's um ... a subject in their school work, isn't it? Or is it the way they are speaking ...?*

Parent A: *Ah, well, they have um ... they are taught in ... comprehension's one, isn't it? They do English, they do essays and what, er ... because they have spelling, spellathons, and this sort of thing, so actually I don't think their spelling is bad ...*

Parent D: *I think their English should be corrected in their compositions and not let go.*

The last point led them to reflect on what they used to do in English when they were at school, and that it seemed more interesting nowadays:

Parent B: *... but, as for making it any better, I don't think they could really.*

Parent A: *I just think it is a lot more interesting than it was when I was at school anyway ...*

Parent C: *Well, in Terry's class there seems to be a lot of emphasis on your apostrophes and question marks and exclamation marks, and I don't know that this is altogether necessary, but I think perhaps there is too much emphasis on that.*

Parent A: *Well, the thing is if you get in the habit of using it, well ...*

Parent B: *Yes, I'll never forget apostrophes and things like that, because it was always drummed into us ...*

Parent A: *... we did the writing that you had to go up to the top of the line (copy writing) and also spelling by chanting ... you know the sort of thing ...*

Parent B: *And, of course, we used to write compositions, as such, and do it on subjects just written up on the board. You write so and so - you didn't get any choice, and umm ... it was quite dull really, I think ...*

In response to a question about whether English teachers should be able to choose the books that they used in their classroom, there was unanimous agreement that they should:

Voices together: *Yes, yes.*

Parent B: *Well, seeing that they have got to teach the children, I think my answer is yes.*

Parent A: *My (other voice over) ... I think so, and they have had the experience of knowing what the children ... what standard they should achieve.*

The parents were equally firm that students should not have any say about what they read in English classrooms:

Parent A: *I don't think so.*

Voices together: *No, no.*

Parent D: *Because they would pick any kind of rubbish - just pick out what they think that they would be able to learn and then never get anywhere.*

Parent A: *And, if they're interested in reading, they'll accept what they are given, I think.*

In response to a question about the influence of the English teacher on developing attitudes and values, the parents felt that other influences had more impact than either English teachers, or the school in general. For example:

Parent C: *And from the home atmosphere ... if the parents will sit down and talk to the children and ask them what they want to be and try to explain what kind of jobs fit ... I think that's where they probably would get it from, but, sometimes the child can grow up right from the time he is able to go to school and he is determined he is going to go into one certain job and he often does it. Not all children can be the same.*

Parent A: *I don't think really when they're young that the English they are taught makes much, umm ... impact on their speech and this kind of thing, because they want to be exactly like the other kids so they use the same expressions, the in thing is what they say. In other words, you say at home, 'You shouldn't say that sort of thing' - they still use it, because everyone else uses it. I think it is when they get older that they really - the grounding counts ... when they get older.*

Parent D: *It depends on some of the teachers ... you can get some teachers that will help the other ones along, and you can get some that think, 'They're dumb', and that's it. They stay dumb. No-one gives them a hand. The parents* *are not giving them a hand and the teachers are not giving them a hand. I don't know whether they still have them kept in after school, or anything, to sort of help catch up, like they used to when I went to school.*

Parent C: *I think they've got remedial classes now. If this one's slower well they just go in there, and that brings them up. I don't think they keep them after school.*

It is evident from the interviews that there is quite a gap between the perceptions of the teacher, the students and the parents about what English is, or should be, in the school. Parents and children seem to share a view that English is really study *about* the use of language, even although reading and story writing may be more interesting. The teacher's stated beliefs about English teaching are moving towards a theory based on language experience - that is, language in use for real purposes and audiences. Even so, the evidence in the student's files indicates that a considerable amount of fragmented language work is still done.

The parents interviewed were some of those who had close and regular contact with the school and the teachers. The uncertainties about the nature of English that they expressed in their interviews leads one to speculate that parents with less contact with the school may have correspondingly less understanding of what school and English teaching is about.

INFLUENCE OF THE PRINCIPAL

In this school, the Principal has had a marked effect on the educational environment within the school. In his interview, he described briefly some of the changes he had been able to bring about.

> *I started to work on the Department to get us new renovations, carpets, painting and things like this. The school had never had an upgrading since it first started so I pressed for an upgrading. We had very little equipment in the school. Things like the VCR (video cassette recorder) had only just come into the school. We've got a hundred thousand dollars being spent on the school for the next year... a new wing being put on, indoor staff toilets... new change-rooms with hot and cold water for the children... These are the things that an area like this really does need.*

(This district has an average rainfall of 1 325 mm, and very cold winters.)

Apart from up-grading the physical environment, the Principal's humanity and support is reflected in staff attitudes. For example, with regard to in-service courses, the English teacher said:

> *Most of the in-service courses that are in the area I go to. Generally speaking, if there's an in-service course, the Principal says 'You'd better go.' ... I enjoy talking to other people and getting their ideas.*

Within the school, the Principal also actively encourages the staff in their initiatives. Again, the English teacher commented:

> *The Principal more or less lets us do what we like, and makes suggestions. The video (VRC) has helped us quite a lot; a lot of extra material has come in. It seems easier to be able to leave school and take trips and expand their background, mainly because he's so very co-operative ... He encourages anything that we want to try. Whatever we want to do, he will try and co-operate in every way. It's really good.*

The influence of the Principal is probably largely due to his beliefs about what a school should be.

> *I think to have something which is a unity, where the students, the staff, the principals (administrators or whatever) are working for a better school... The schools are too big... To me, a school shouldn't be more than 400 students; and I would like to see it go from Year 1 right through to Year 12... This idea of having 1 200-1 400 students in a school is ludicrous. We can't cater for the needs of individual teachers ... I enjoy finding out what teachers are doing, and I enjoy working to make the climate in the school beneficial to everybody. I want my teachers to enjoy teaching; I want my students to enjoy learning and therefore I'll do everything I can to do that. If they want something I will try and get it for them.*

CASE STUDY 2—COUNTRY SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

REASONS FOR SELECTION

This school fulfilled several of the criteria for selecting case-study schools. One of our main reasons was that it is a country senior high school with an agricultural wing, and as such has one of the few alternative courses in upper-school English. This course is provided for the students in the agricultural wings of the four agricultural schools; it is examined by a panel of teachers drawn from those who teach this course, and is designed to meet the needs of students who intend to go into farming or associated work. Its assessment therefore lies outside the constraints of the general examination system, and its content is closely related to the interests and needs of a specific group of students. We were interested to see what kind of English work such circumstances would yield as compared with normal work aimed at TAE.

The school is relatively small - 456 students, including those at the agricultural school - and has established close ties with the local community. It has a pleasant campus set on a low hill with buildings separated by open space and trees and bush nearby. There is forest, river and a big natural dam within a short distance.

On arriving for our four days' visit we had a long interview with the Principal, who put the school in its context of the local community for us, and discussed some of the matters which he felt to be important.

THE STUDENTS

Principal: *It's basically a farming area, but we do have a big meatworks in the town, which is a fair basis for employment. There's a centre for forestry and irrigation - it's an irrigation area, and a lot of the properties are quite small. Generally the irrigation areas tend to be sound farming properties. Hence a fair percentage of our kids are from farms or farm-associated industry.*

We have a very big Italian community here. Most of them are probably second or third generation, but we do have the odd kid who arrives straight from Italy... Most of the kids can speak perfect English, but perhaps suffer from a lack of literary experience at home.

Interviewer: *What about the Aborigines?*

Principal: *Most of them are mission kids, out of R——— mission, but not all. The ones that come from up north, where perhaps they've had a fairly limited educational experience... We had four or five earlier in the year who were extremely limited in their ability to read.*

Interviewer: *Have you a remedial teacher or someone who gives special attention to the kids?*

Principal: *We have Departmental approval to have somebody two-fifths, but we just can't get anybody to do it, and this is our problem.*

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

The nature of the local community has a strong effect on the kinds of courses which are popular in the school, and on the retention of students in upper school. The Principal said:

> *We just haven't the numbers to run alternative courses (other than General English in the Ag. School). The kids here (or their parents) seem very determined to stick with the more traditional things. We can't get the boys to do technical drawing, and the numbers in our applied technology class are so small that we have to combine the class. They seem very TAE orientated.*

Interviewer: *Maybe that's got something to do with the country. I grew up in the country and we knew that the only chance of getting a job outside the town was passing the TAE.*

Principal: *I think this is quite a factor. I think kids in the city can see far more possible opportunities, whereas our kids see it as a means of getting a job outside the town, because there is not much going here... Out of 25 in upper school, we have at least three who I doubt would have stayed on to Year 12 if they had been a city school - they would have hoped to get an apprenticeship. But there was nothing going in the town; their parents didn't want them to leave and go away, and so they stayed on, which is certainly a good thing.*

He also told us that local employers have been involved in an extensive programme of interviewing students in Year 10. Even though they may not have jobs to offer, it provides a real-life interview experience for the students and brings the employers into contact with the students and the school.

GRADING AND STREAMING

Since one of our aims was to sound out opinion about the various forms of assessment, we asked about the BSE comparability test. The Principal's views are shared by his senior staff.

Principal: *You mean the comparability tests? We do them all.*

Interviewer: *You do them all? Is that the teacher's choice? Do you find them useful, or what?*

Principal: *No, it's the result of senior staff discussion. The first one they do in Year 8. Quite a number of schools don't do it, but we do. (The only compulsory one is in Year 9.)*

Interviewer: *What help do you think it gives you?*

Principal: *It's another way of looking at the kids.*

The Principal is also firmly convinced of the value of grading and streaming the students.

> *I'm all for grading in classes. I've never wavered from this. I feel particularly in maths it's most important. I feel it's important too in English... I'm quite sure you can teach these (low ability students) the basic skills of communication, which are about all they are going to need. I feel that you have those kids in one area and you get right to them. You have your top kids in another area and that's where you can really do your extension work. If you have them all mixed up together, I feel the teacher tends to teach to the middle; hence I feel that both ends are neglected.*

CONTINUITY

Being aware of the problems of staffing country schools, we asked about the length of experience of the four English teachers, and how long they had been in this school. We found that two of the teachers were experienced, another was in his third year of teaching, and the fourth teacher in her second year. As far as this school was concerned, one was in his third year there, one in her second, and two were in their first. We asked the Principal how either continuity or innovation could flourish with that rate of turnover. We found he had strong views about the promotional system and the way it affects teaching, particularly in the lower school:

> *You take a younger teacher in secondary school: they must teach upper school, and they must get as much as they can in their first six or seven years if they're looking for promotion to senior master. When it comes to selection, if you want to be senior master - say, of social studies - it's no use you expecting to get the job if you tell them you've concentrated on the lower ability kids in lower school. Unless you can get up there and tell the tribunal that you have organized upper school history, geography, economics, you won't get a job. I think this is a very bad feature...*
>
> *I've been Principal of a district high, and much as I'm against this sort of thing, I've had to recommend very strongly to a teacher that he didn't stay in that district high any longer because he was in his third year and he had never taught upper school...*
>
> *I feel it is a weakness in our system that a teacher cannot concentrate on something which is an art in itself - to take the Year 9s and so on who will never go beyond Year 10. Young able teachers can't afford to think in those terms.*

GENERAL ENGLISH WITH THE AGRICULTURAL STUDENTS

Although we heard a good deal about the General English Course for the agricultural students we suggested that we might come back for a further interview with the Principal at the end of the week when we had met the students and the staff who teach them, and had visited the Agricultural Wing - which is separate from the school - and observed some lessons.

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Our first meeting with the agricultural students was at a Year 11 class taken by the senior English master - a literature-cum-screen appreciation lesson. They were reading *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* and had been to Perth to see the film, just released. It was a lively discussion lesson between the whole class and the teacher. He began by drawing out their initial responses to the film - without comment from him - and then took them deeper into it by such questions as: Why do you think anyone would want to make a film - or write a book about an incident that happened some 70 years ago? Whose side were you on? Do you think you were meant to take sides? In addition to the narrative events, what else was it about? Their replies were full and thoughtful, and they were soon asking him things about the film. The session had an edge on it because film-making and drama is a much-regarded part of their course.

We then interviewed three students from the class who had entered Year 11 of the Ag. School from three different high schools. We asked them how the English in the General English course compared with the English they had done in their various high schools.

Ray:	*I've found English more interesting since I've been here at Ag. School than I did back at any other school... At high school I seemed to do more grammar; that is what it was most of the time. As soon as I came here you seemed to get involved a bit more in the world and what it's going to be like when you leave school and it gets you more prepared.*
Craig J.:	*It was the same at my high school. They used to hammer reading comprehension where you read the story and answer the questions. I used to hate it. But here, like today, it's been good - stuff that's more helpful to you.*
Craig B.:	*Yes, I used to think of English as one big bore - I used to hate it! But now I go to English knowing that we could be making a film, we could be off in the bus doing something, or going to a film. It's really good. It's not all written out work. Several years ago you would just sit there at the desk and write out endless notes that the teacher would put down. Now, it's bit by bit, more activities, more practical stuff.*
Ray:	*It's helpful and enjoyable at the same time.*

We then went to a Year 12 class taught by the teacher in his third year who took most of the English with the agricultural students. This too was a class discussion. They had been off on a day excursion to Perth to spend the morning at the Agricultural Show and gone to a film in the afternoon, so the lesson was concerned with what they had done. It appeared they had not found much to interest them in the Show but had rapidly made for the fairground section and spent most of their time there. The teacher then took them into a discussion of what they had spent their money on, how much money they had spent (itemized), what they thought was worth spending money on, and what they valued in what they did in their leisure time. These matters were discussed in an involved and articulate way.

In a subsequent interview with three of the students from this class it was made clear that they valued the opportunity to discuss real issues and to be taken deeper into them; and they valued particularly the capacity to express themselves clearly and articulately. They recognized and appreciated this focus in their course. A session which illustrates this focus arose from a visit they had made to a used-car yard to find out what they could about prices, makes and condition. Subsequently the class went down to the motor-bike shed to act out a simulation. One student was the salesman, and another the customer. The conversation and the tactics were discussed and then another pair tried it. Later they went back to their classroom to construct lists of do's and don'ts when buying a second-hand bike.

In an interview, the students commented on the value of this experience to them.

Craig: *Stuff like that is more important... Like, more young people now have got to go out and buy cars, go working, go out for lunch and stuff like that...*

Ray: *...When we leave school at the end of this, most of us are going to go out and become farmers. If you ever have to speak for your local community, well, that's important, and also when you want to communicate with other people. Like, most people think farmers are brought up rough, and they can't speak; they haven't been taught. And you go out and show them up.*

The strength of the General English course lay in the degree to which it met the needs and interests of the students for whom it was designed. The variety offered and the close attention to these needs and interests is shown in a brief description of one week's activities for the Year 11 students given by the senior English master:

> *One of the interesting things we did in first term was to read 'Islands of Angry Ghosts' by Hugh Edwards, and after a discussion of the plot, characters situation, etc., I took them to Fremantle on a one-day trip, where the artifacts that were taken from the wreck of the 'Batavia' were displayed. Of course, this is the material that the book is about. The boys appreciated this. Then I took them on a launch trip in the port for them to be able to look at the activities in and around the port, and have an idea of the functions of a port and its importance to them as farmers. They saw at the time farmers loading onto the ships cattle which were banned by the port workers, and this gave them some concrete idea of the things they had read in the papers about the disagreement between port workers and farmers. It sort of made them realize the relationship of the port to their working lives.*
>
> *Then we went and saw a movie, 'Star Wars', which I think they enjoyed very much.*
>
> *When we came back to school we spent about two periods discussing the things we had seen in the museum, things we observed in the port, and our impressions of the movie, 'Star Wars'.*

Apart from the writing that arose in connection with particular operations - such as making a guide for buying used cars - close attention was given to report writing. Since there is a farm attached to the Ag. School, and they spend periods of time working on it, there are plenty of things for them to report on. They struggle to master this skill, just as they struggle to express their ideas orally, because they can see its relevance to their future work, though in general they don't find writing easy, or like doing it unless they can see the point of it.

General English is, at present, the only alternative to TAE English that has been approved for the Certificate of Secondary Education. One of the conditions of that approval is that the course is available for any school to choose. Thus the number of schools offering the course has grown from the original four agricultural schools where the course was designed (for quite specific needs) to twelve schools, including some in the metropolitan area.

Principal: *I was on the original committee which was set up to come up with a course of English specifically designed towards the students in four agricultural schools..... A farmer is a businessman, and his ability to write concise, accurate business letters is extremely important, and the ability to read the technical journals is a very specific type of reading skill... It also included literature, because this is recognized as an important part of anyone's development. It wasn't to be straight business English - we needed to develop both sides. From there it has been gradually watered down, so that it is a course which can be taken in any school.*

Interviewer: *When you say it has been watered down, where has this happened?*

Principal: *If the course is taken up by twenty other schools, you're then forced into a situation where the exam itself must be common to all the schools... My concern is that the more it becomes general, in the sense that it can be done by any school, the more the agricultural area may be phased out. Our proposed solution to this is to make certain areas optional, so that we can retain an area that will be done specifically by agricultural students, but probably not done by students in other schools. In this way I hope we can retain sufficient area within the course where we can do the things we originally set out to do.*

The Principal (and his senior master of English) were expressing the natural anxiety of teachers who had designed and instituted a satisfactory *local* examination based on a specific course, that this course might be taken by so many schools that it became a mass examination and thereafter determined the course instead of reflecting the course.

We had seen the other side of the coin in one of the largest metropolitan schools, where the senior English master had told us how pleased he was that his Year 11 students could now opt for the General English course. The issue would seem to be between a mass examination which inevitably dominates the syllabus and a proliferation of appropriate alternative courses (and the examinations they lead up to).

THE ENGLISH STAFF AND THEIR VIEW OF ENGLISH

The most noticeable feature of the English department was the sense of a team working together. The four full-time teachers share the same office so consultation is easy, and we found a greater consensus about English than in most other schools we visited. Perhaps four teachers is an ideal number for this way of working.

The Senior Master said, about the shared aims and beliefs of the English staff:

> *We agree that it is singularly important to educate our students to be well-rounded individuals who are courteous, tolerant and humane. We believe that we choose English and its literature as central to those broad aims... We agree that working as a team of individuals is the best way of teaching English.....and that by sharing ideas, experiences and supporting each other, we are able to work better as a team of English teachers.*

In spite of marked individual differences among the English teachers in their styles of teaching and the emphases in their work, a commonality of general beliefs about English was apparent when they were asked independently what they regarded as progress in English. The Senior Master said:

> *I believe we should educate students to be tolerant, broadminded people who are aware of things that are going on around them... I think it's easy to see progress in writing, but the intangible things.....are not developed so easily. But if you have a student or a class for two years you can see this development of sensitivities - things like tolerance, greater appreciation of literature, greater awareness of the social, political, economic and cultural things all around us. The students start to read more. You notice the types of books they start to read. You can see progress in these ways.*

The other teachers, one in an interview, and another in her self-description, made very similar points:

Teacher 2: *It's hard to find a label, but I feel that if I was contributing to the kid's social values, tolerance, happiness, then I'd feel far more reward than if I had made them better essay writers, better punctuators, or whatever. I've been told that in that case I should be a social worker and not a teacher... I guess I'd have to come back to the student's outlook socially - what sort of person they are. Are they narrow minded in their outlook towards people, books, films, topics, or are they prepared to explore?*

Teacher 3: *I hope my students at the end of the year will not only be prepared for the exams but also for life. I hope they'll come to see literature as dealing with the universals of life... One of the main things I hope is that I have helped to develop a love of literature... I hope that my students will be thinking people.*

The value these teachers place on literature emerges from these comments and was reiterated on many other occasions. It is perhaps summed up by the senior master's reply to a question about what he would spend extra money on if he had it:

> *I'd create an English room. I'd have a very good stereo system and records with lots of poetry, plays, all sorts of music - ethnic, classical, popular - all sorts of dramatic readings of books. I would have all sorts of*

> *sets of novels, plays, poetry, games, etc. I'd have it as a place where students would want to come and work in an informal atmosphere. I'd have projection equipment, photography equipment, slides, art materials, books on art, books on music - I suppose a mini-cultural centre, if you like, with the accent on English.*

His views on the breadth of resources for English were supported by other English teachers. Teacher 2 said:

> *I use nearly all of them... I feel with film, television and newspapers they are forms of language the students contact every day... When I first started teaching I didn't see any great merit in them, but they were there and they fitted roughly into English. Now I see them as integral parts of the world the kids are living in, and as other ways of understanding.*

Film-making and film appreciation were strong features of the English courses - and by no means centred on the General English course. We found two classes making films in the week we were in the high school. The teachers have considerable technical know-how so the activities we saw were practical and well organized. One class was in groups of five engaged in rehearsing two-minute improvised vignettes, some of them indoors, but mostly out. Shooting had begun before we left.

We learned that there was no fund for processing the films that were made. The cost was met by staff and students, and occasionally by a film show.

Two of the teachers emphasized drama and role play. One said:

> *With literature I always introduce a novel with drama. I'll take some incident from the novel, and they won't dramatize that incident, but they will dramatize what that incident is about from their own experience - like running away from home, for instance.*

Another regarded drama as a means of socialization in a Basic-level class, and said:

> *...Drama ... it's very relaxed, very informal, and I guess my aims are very much social. I spent a lot of time last year getting them to do role plays and little social dramas of pretty much their own invention...*

We saw a dance drama being patiently rehearsed all through a long, hot afternoon, and just failed to catch the mini-bus that was taking a group of high school students to perform a playlet in the primary school.

LANGUAGE ACROSS THE CURRICULUM AND BEYOND

The English staff has made considerable effort to explain to other staff members what it is they think themselves to be doing. This was prompted by an in-service course attended by the senior master. As a result there was a full staff meeting, where the issues raised at the in-service course were discussed. The staff members agreed that basic skills and literacy were not the responsibility of English teachers only but of the whole staff. The English teachers provide a list of skills for all staff members as a guideline to what the English department is aiming at.

They also try to work with people outside the school wherever possible. Speakers from the town or neighbourhood are invited quite often to talk to the General English students; and the English teacher taking the drama options arranged for her students to produce plays for the local primary school. One of the English teachers co-operated with the business education teacher for writing letters applying for jobs, and students will later have interviews with local employers. This last aspect is part of a wider project organized by the senior master of English to provide experience for the students, and to develop contacts between the school and the local community.

CONSTRAINTS ON THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

The teachers spoke of various constraints on their work. The Senior Master said:

> *There is slight difficulty in rearranging our furniture, because we have these transportable classrooms and the windows are very low. Since we've had them we've had a number of broken windows, and we've had to draw the desks in, away from the windows.*

Although we had observed teachers taking students outside for excursions, filming and drama, the second teacher found the classroom and the school as an institution quite restrictive:

> *The chief constraint is the classroom. We've had public edicts to staff meetings here about taking classes outside the classroom - that as far as possible they should be left inside, which is a constraint on me. Our classrooms are those crumby demountable things. The desks are in rows; there's nothing on the walls, nothing on the ceilings; they're remarkably sterile. But in a country school, I've found that the cleaners have been here for years and they have their say, and by the time you get through all that, it's just not worth it... If I had my own money and my own way, the English department would have its own rooms and the furniture and the environment would be rather different.*

The Senior Master said:

> *There is a gap between what I would like to do and what I actually do. If I had a room to myself with the type of material I wanted, the type of lesson I wanted to conduct, and the time that I needed to conduct them in, I guess I would be teaching totally differently from the way I am now. For instance, I'd use that cultural centre type of approach (described earlier) where you could have students coming in at times when they wanted to, selecting things they wanted to.*

It should perhaps be noted here that in the all-change, double-quick promotion system criticized earlier by the Principal, before a teacher can get any changes made, he is off to another job, so mostly he won't bother, and the continuity is often provided by non-educational personnel, like cleaners - who, in some of our case-study schools, literally swept us out of the classrooms as the bell went, with us muttering unnoticed questions about 'idle plant'.

The second teacher continued:

> *When I talk about the constraints of the classroom, the thing that tires me is the constant drilling of lower school students. 'Line up, in we go, keep quiet, sit down, stand up.' That's the thing that after two and a half years is grinding, and if I have a day where I have to do a lot of that sort of thing, I do start to think I'll go and do something else. If I had my way, what I would like to do is take forty students on a world tour with me for two years. I took forty-odd away in the holidays and we learnt an awful amount. That's what I saw as education...*

STUDENTS' VIEWS VALUED

It is noticeable how much the English teachers in this school respond to the feelings and interests of the students. The teachers wanted to hear the tapes we made of interviews with students, and two of them planned to alter their programmes after listening to the tapes. All four teachers were convinced of the importance of the students' thoughts, opinions and interests to the teaching and learning of English. The Senior Master said:

> *That's what it's all about. It's developing the students' sensitivities, giving them confidence in their own ideas, attitudes, helping them, if they have new ideas, through discussion and amelioration to arrive at a balanced, sensible, mature judgement.*

The third teacher, in supporting this view, linked it with the importance of student talk. She said:

> *If we've decided that talk is essential, then I find that the things that kids talk most freely and easily about are the things that they know about, the things they've thought about before and therefore have ideas on ... There is a place for introducing them to new ideas, through literature or whatever, but the initial stimulus has to come through something familiar.*

Another teacher went on to relate his sense of the importance of students' opinions and responses to changes in his own teaching:

> *I've always been very self-confident as a teacher and I've always subconsciously felt that I've got all the resources to make any kid do what I want him to do. That's been tempered in three years of teaching, with a lot of frustration in the meantime. But I still have problem in myself, in that I do not take as much from others as I could do - in my own development. And I do see that as a problem. I tend to sort of boldly think that I've got the goods and everyone should listen to me.*

Interviewer: *Yet you take an awful lot from the kids don't you?*

Teacher: *Yes, I take an awful lot from the kids.*

Interviewer: *Partly because you see more of the kids, so you can get more from them, while your contacts with your fellow teachers are a bit more scanty?*

Teacher: *Yes, that's true, although it wasn't the case when I first started teaching (two and a half years ago). Then I wouldn't have taken anything from the kids. It was all give, because I thought I had it all. But that's just part of survival, and I realize now that the only way they're going to accept anything from me is if it's an exchange.*

Interviewer: *That's a pretty good lesson.*

Teacher: *Well, it is, but I've really only learned that through my social contact with the kids and their parents.*

ENGLISH AND THE BSE EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS

The teachers found BSE assessment requirements and TAE examinations constraining to varying degrees. Of TAE exams, the Senior Master said:

> *I don't see it as totally restricting. There is a set of skills which you have to teach the students, and if you are sure that the students can cope with those particular skills that are examined and will do well, then outside of that, I think there is the opportunity to pursue avenues not necessarily related to the curriculum.*

The English teachers had been experimenting with periodical testing during the year, and collectively arrived at the opinion expressed by the second teacher.

> *I think the biggest gap (between what I would like to do and what I actually do) is my feeling of obligation to the students to prepare them, either for external exams or for tests. We have lower-school testing here, which I abhor. I don't even go to the trouble of preparing my kids for these now. I can't see any sense in testing the kids in grammar and comprehension and so on...*
>
> *... with upper school and General English I have a responsibility to those kids to prepare them for the exam. It's a drag for them, a drag for me, but it's got to be done.*

The essential point, as this teacher saw it,was that the General English course was designed to improve functional communication skills of reading, writing, talking, listening, understanding and thinking. The external examination, which moderated the internal grade, assessed only writing. The teacher went on to say:

> *I suppose the thing I get most stirred up over is the assessment of the kids' work. I know its sort of fussy, but if we're going to assess them, we should assess what we think the kid should be doing, not just something that it's easy to put a mark on. I tend to make a fair bit of noise around the place on that.*

The third teacher also found the external examination negatively restrictive in upper school:

> *Most of the work is geared to the exam. Although I've tried to encourage their areas of interest, even though*

> *there are alternative courses set down, you're not given the time, because you must keep in mind that the exam is looming at the end of the year. The students expect this; they expect to be prepared for the exam, and that's what their parents expect. And you haven't really got half the time to explore those other areas...*

She did explore other areas; we saw two of her classes making films, but in upper school she is firmly exam oriented, and when the students come in to Year 8 she is at present giving them a structured course consisting of five aspects - language skills, creative writing, literature, reading comprehension, and oral English, each of which was done for one period a week. In her self-description she gave her reasons for this. She was also frustrated by the comparative cultural isolation of the country school:

> *... I don't know what can be done for country students. We do as much as we can, but it is one aspect - the appreciation of the film medium, of seeing literature translated into film... and not just films but drama, in drama presented on a stage - something which our students are at a disadvantage.*

WHAT THESE ENGLISH TEACHERS VALUED MOST

The last question in the long interview with the Senior Master of English and the second teacher asked what they held to be of most value in their work as English teachers. The Senior Master saw it as a question of professional freedom, and professional responsibility.

> *I think I would defend at all costs the individual teacher's right to teach his bias, his forte, his interest - to use his own personal approach... And I say team work and being part of the group, but not lessening the individual's importance - a supportive atmosphere - is very important... Consideration and respect for others, for their attitudes and opinions, sharing ideas, criticism of each other's work in a supportive manner.*

The second teacher said:

> *I would defend the right for English teachers to do what they think is best; I suppose I would defend that very noisily... and the right of students to express themselves freely.*

On our last day we went to see the Principal again and on this occasion he spoke at some length about the Schools Commission Regional Committee. He thought it was making a significant contribution to in-service teacher development; its particular strength, he thought, lay in the fact that it provided a channel by which teachers made their own suggestions for the fields, or topics, they wanted to study and then made their own arrangements for the meetings. The Principal thought that teachers themselves knew best what they wanted and he welcomed this channel for local initiative, in addition to the courses provided on the initiative of the Education Department.

Finally he told us that he hoped we would be able to go round the farm with two of the agricultural students. This seemed a very pleasant way of finishing our visit; by now we knew the location, the staff and a fair number of the students. We spent a leisurely, interesting hour walking round orchards (oranges and mandarins), arable areas, pigs and piggeries, cows and dairy sheds, farm machinery and buildings. Our companions were relaxed, talkative, informative and enthusiastic. They told us they thought they were getting a good education.

CASE STUDY 3—CLASS I DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

REASONS FOR SELECTION

This school is a Class I district high school, small, extremely isolated, and seventy per cent of its students are Aborigines. The school was chosen from a number of similar ones in the Kimberley region, because it was thought to have changed markedly since Aboriginal Education became a special branch of the Education Department.

THE SCHOOL

There were 147 students in 1978 - 115 in Years 8-10, 9 in a special Year 11 class, and 23 in a special 'project' working independently of the general timetable, and doing nearly all their work with two specially trained teachers. There was one specialist English teacher with five years' experience, some of it in schools other than this one. Otherwise, English is taught by the form teachers. In general, English is seen more in terms of things you do which involve reading and writing rather than study of the language, although some teachers straight from college tend to engage in exercises on language usage. The Principal reported that seventy-five per cent of the Aboriginal students have significant difficulty with English.

THE TWO COMMUNITIES

The town was once a significant port for the region but cattle now go by road, and few ships call any more. It is 179 and 618 kilometres to the nearest towns, and 1 200 kilometres by road to the Regional Centre. During the wet season access is only possible by plane.

The European population has a high mobility. People come up for three or four years on a job, and then move somewhere else. Schooling presents a problem when children reach fifteen. Parents then have to choose between sending their children to boarding-school (which is very expensive), moving to a larger centre, or correspondence lessons. Of the Aboriginal children, the English teacher said:

> *Their life-styles present a bit of a problem. You have the Hostel kids who are boarding. They come from other stations or settlement-type places like C——— C——. Then you have the kids who live in M——— (a local settlement, once a mission). They have a different kind of lifestyle - not greatly different, but they're all together in the settlement, not from scattered places like the hostel students. Then you have the town coloureds and Aboriginals who may have some contact with station life, or may not. They may just be fringe-dwellers of the town area. Some of them may be employed but jobs are few.*

There are also the children of tribal Aborigines, who appear in D——— for a period, turn up at school for some weeks or months, them move away until the next time.

FROM THE OBSERVER'S NOTEBOOK

I was immediately struck by the absence of many of the usual school demarcation lines (between primary and secondary school, for instance). Not one bit of the campus is allotted solely to either. The staff share a common-room, and you can't tell primary from secondary teachers until you find out who they are teaching. So ideas spill about. The administration offices are all together with the staff-room and nurse's suite. The undefined nature of the grounds and the scatter of buildings tends to mix up the students - they play anywhere. There are no defined areas for boys, girls or little ones, except by natural gravitation.

The initial effect of this was to make it seem almost pedantic to ask about English. Matters of broader educational significance pushed into focus first - for example, the problems of a particularly diverse student population, and it's place in the community. The priorities I observed seemed to me to be

> *Health and cleanliness. The school nurse getting the day right for the kids who needed it, e.g. going into the shower with a little group of tribal Aborigines who came to the school for the first time, cleaning up the bites and small wounds; and gentling their shyness and anxiety; and the canteen demonstrating quality of food and presentation and freedom to choose and order. Another version of 'basics'.*
>
> *Relationship between staff and students. Informal and concerned, but firm; definitely adults with children, but good companions too, joining in basketball, drama, camping trips. Therefore talk flourishes-and laughter.*
>
> *Literacy. Didn't have time to see anything much of the primary classes, though the Principal thinks they - and the pre-primary - are the heart of the matter. It's the quality of presentation that hits you in this school. My guess is that it must start in the primary classes. Not just neatness, though this is part of it. I mean the aesthetic of making something look good with colours and letters and lines and shapes and layout - the lot. This, of course, is a resource the Aboriginal children already have, so it's not alien and builds on what is already there.*

INTERVIEW WITH THE PRINCIPAL

The first question was about the ways in which he and his staff have changed things in the four years he had been at the school. (Note: Like the other teachers a principal is unlikely to stay more than one or two years, even one in these isolated schools.)

The first changes the Principal identified came from outside agencies, and affected staffing, building programmes and resources.

Staffing

> *'All of a sudden, good staff started coming to the school... Once you got good staff, they started to think about their jobs, rather than just go in and earn their money and walk out at 3.30. The first thing staff say when they come here is, 'Oh, my God, they have nothing. What am I going to do? Everything that was taught me in college doesn't work here.' Thinking staff will ask themselves these questions; then they try and do something about it, which they have done. This*

> *immediately gave different approaches to education for the kids. We also have support staff like the school nurse, three teacher-librarians and three Aboriginal teachers' aides.*

Federal assistance

> *We got beautiful buildings like the administration building (staff-room, senior teachers' offices, and a school nurse's suite) plus a resource centre as a result of Commonwealth money. These are air-conditioned spots on the campus where teachers can take kids to cool off. When it's hot up here, I can tell you it's depressing. Thirty to forty kids in a room in 35° - 40°C, and you get the smell of wet wool as they sweat. By the end of the year the classrooms will be air-conditioned too, so learning will have more chance.*

Federal funding from various sources also provides the salaries for the school nurse, three Aboriginal teaching aides and a resource teacher.

The Aboriginal Education Branch

> *The Aboriginal Education Branch has backed what we're trying to do, mainly in terms of resources and advice, help with printing, and things of that sort. Quite frankly, the big open primary classroom and our project centre would not exist without the help and advice of the Aboriginal Education Branch.*

The Parents and Citizens' Association

> *We've also had a very active Parents and Citizens' Committee, who run the canteen, plus making money for resources within the school.*

When asked to say more about his own views and changes, the Principal said:

> *The only thing that I've changed within the school really is the organization of the students. Essentially I'm talking about the non-Achievement Certificate stream in the high school, and the 'bridging' groups in the primary school. I'm not claiming credit for that, because it's nothing new, and it was done in consultation with the staff. I think that organization is having real benefits at the moment.*

Essentially, reorganization of students separated the non-Achievement Certificate students from the rest by means of parallel age groups, which were taught very differently. He called these groups 'bridging' groups and insisted that it was a very different notion from 'streaming'. (See also the report of the Principals' Conference at the Regional Centre later in this study.)

The Principal also pointed out a change in the retention rates at the school, which he thought reflected a change in the attitude of the community to the school:

> *I have a very interesting graph here which shows our loss of kids from Year 7. In the last three years we are retaining the kids, because the parents are starting to believe in the school once again, and our own primary school is starting once again to feed the high school... Parents are not sending their kids to colleges in Perth. After all, parents do want their kids with them as long as they can keep them. Year 8 is a much larger class than Year 10, and by the time the Year 8s reach Year 10, I am hopeful there will be*

> *some scholarship coming out of it. I want to see the school catering for that sector too.*

The comparatively large number of Aboriginal students also influenced the changes in the school. The Principal said:

> *All the experiments we tried were really because the traditional education wasn't working for the Aboriginals, so it's the Aboriginals who have made us start thinking about things - who have provided us with the incentive to think about their education.*

A discussion followed about whether the Principal's re-organization was, in fact, just 'streaming'. He insisted that it reflected a different *kind* of education for non-Achievement Certificate students. 'Streaming' pre-supposes that all students are getting the same kind of education at different levels, whereas 'bridging' aims at providing a threshold of education for Aboriginal students by an entirely different means. If it works and makes them literate, giving them an understanding that the school is a place that they can go to with confidence and move *from*, then they will have made some sort of bridge to the world of the other students.

Future development

The next question was about the future development of the school. The Principal began by talking about the Aborigines:

> *They want further education so they go down to Perth and fail for various social reasons, and end up back here just wandering round... Yet there is no reason why our school should get rid of kids at fifteen, particularly the Aboriginals. Why should education end at fifteen?*

The Principal had three groups in mind:

- Students able enough to do their Certificate of Secondary Education or the Tertiary Admissions Examination could work through the Isolated Students' Matriculation Scheme and use the resources of the school.

- For the students without the ability to complete a Certificate of Secondary Education, but who want more schooling, the school runs a small Year 11 alternative course in business education. In 1978, there were seven students of 16, 17 and 18 years (six Aboriginal girls and one white boy) working well together, and providing a useful 'top' to the school.

- There are boys (16 - 19 years) who drift back to school. The Principal wants to start a class that produces things as well as giving the students some design experience and manual skills. He gave an illustration:

  > *One small thing we've started off is dog-proof dustbins. These sell, and the students get paid the labour component in the cost... And there is a demand for bricks up here. I want to get a small brick-making machine. I'll train fellows who may then get taken on the payroll of the Shire Council. We have got to get them into the work-force.*

Importance of specialist teachers

The Principal stressed the very high value that he put on the teachers who were specialists in their subject areas.

> *I do desperately have the aim of uplifting and maintaining that academic stream. You can, in a place like this become so obsessed with the plight of the Aboriginals that you forget the academic stream ... The future aim for this is to strive for scholarship... I would never get rid of my subject specialist; you need them for the academic kids. Only the specialists can give them valuable and real extension work.*

Teacher development

The Conference of North-West Principals had stressed the special need for teacher development in their area. There are several aspects to this:

- The need for some specific training for working with Aboriginal children.
- The need for induction programmes, for it is accepted that a large proportion of teachers coming to the North-West will be new teachers. Much of how young teachers turn out depends on sympathetic and informed help at this stage.
- Teacher development within the school by means of staff discussions.
- There are also courses run with the help of regional funds. The teachers of the North-West have formed their own in-service committee and run the courses. This is Schools Commission money, but the Regional Director has the purse-strings.

The Principal attributed most of the changes in the school to other people, but every member of staff interviewed spoke strongly about his influence.

PARENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL AND ITS PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY

Two white parents

These parents have a son in the primary section. They are probably not typical of the parents, having become settled in a town where about two-thirds of the population changes every three years. They therefore represent the stable minority, seeing themselves as a part of the permanent community and participating actively in it. The mother helps daily in the school canteen, and both are active on the Parents and Citizens' Committee.

The conversation began with a concern for basic literacy, and then moved into what they wanted for their son in terms of education as a whole. From English they wanted 'a good command of his own language; it's essential in after life'.

Interviewer: *What does that mean in detail?*

Father: *Being able to write a letter properly, speak coherently, get his thoughts together properly, and the thing in the schools of late which I deplore - they don't go for spelling...*

Interviewer: *Do you think employers want a higher standard than they used to?*

Father: *Yes, I do. They want a more professional attitude in the youngsters they employ.*

Interviewer: *What more do you want for your son in the way of education?*

Father: *We want a good, sound education for him here. The way the school is now being run is excellent.*

About reading these parents have no worries. Both read a lot themselves so their boy sees them reading. They give him books and both read aloud to him a great deal. Of his future they said: '*Over a lot of things later on, we want him to decide for himself. We don't want to push him into things.*' Ideally they would like the school to become a senior high, so that the family need not be split up, but they realized the difficulty of the population.

Father: *We have a problem, of course, with the native population. The kids aren't stupid, but they can't take homework home because there's nowhere to take it, so obviously they fall back.*

He summed up his hopes for Adam.

We want to educate him to fit into the community and be part of life - and to be able to do things for himself.

Two Aboriginal parents

These parents (a mother and a grandmother) were no more typical than those interviewed above, for they represented the most stable and articulate elements in the Aboriginal population. They both live in the Settlement, have been mission-educated and have children or grandchildren in the school. Essentially, they have educational desires similar to those of the first parents interviewed.

Mrs A : *We came all the way down from ———— so that our children could be better educated ... and for medical attention ... and more of a social life together. Our children being involved with activities with European kids makes it easier for them to understand each other and make friends ... They seem to work together. They have their sports and they have social matters at school. They enjoy their evenings very much; they have dancing, they have their band there and they really love it.*

Mrs B : *And the school is able to take back the children (those who leave early to look for a job.) These boys have been out, wandering around the community, feeling so bored at home. Now they are wanting to go back to that school.*

Mrs A : *My little girl had some maths homework. It was beyond my understanding, different from the maths I learnt. I couldn't help her.*

Then followed some talk about their own skills as freehand carving of boab nuts and the telling of oral stories at bed time.

FROM THE OBSERVER'S NOTEBOOK

A talk with an Aboriginal teacher's aide. She had no formal training in teaching and her own education had been very limited. She had taken a course in grammar. She had been employed by the Wycliff Bible translaters to translate religious material and simple books for basic literacy into her own language. She said their legends had been written down but the oral stories are still told in the evenings when people are settling down for bed. There's a taboo on telling them in the sunshine. She also had some experience of teaching reading and sight copying to adult illiterates who came to her home for lessons. Her husband was the member for the West Kimberleys of the National Aboriginal Conference.

She helped with the Year 2 class (six- and seven-year-olds). The class teacher helped her and wrote programmes for her. The kids were very excited to have a black teacher. She wished she knew enough to help with other children. She said education was urgent for her people because of their voting rights and their need to understand court procedure. She herself is handicapped in the job she is now doing because she feels she lacks education.

Visit to a primary class. Year 2, whom the Aboriginal aide works with. All Aboriginal children at all levels, some very bright. Classroom was full of the usual primary school 'products' - pictures, objects, models, pedagogical murals concerned with letters, words, numbers. A very resourceful young teacher. She twice referred to 'drills' as if I would know what she meant and expect them. I didn't, and it wasn't clear from the context what these were.

The 'Project' class. In effect an alternative course for non-Achievement Certificate students between thirteen and fifteen. They have their own demountable hut full of equipment and products - typewriters, a copier, simple calculators, every kind of magazine and booklet, paints, coloured inks, scissors, glue - the walls covered with 'products' like a primary classroom. Specially notable were the 'big' books made by them and their teachers with superb photographs and short written pieces about their camping and other expeditions and doings. Tremendous lot of visual material.

Two teachers (husband and wife) run the class. They aim to give survival skills, and to expand the students' oral English in addition to reading and numeracy. There is no class teaching. The teachers work all the time with individuals or small groups. There is no formal teaching of reading, but books and things to read are everywhere. They have two periods a week in the library. The teachers use standardized tests to assess in terms of reading ages. Over ten months this year the average increase in reading age was thirteen months with a range in gains of two years and four months to three months - and no formal teaching of reading.

Class Eleven. This is an alternative commercial course for non-Achievement Certificate students over the age of fifteen, and aims at giving the students some vocational and social skills. Again, one teacher runs the class of six Aboriginal girls and one white boy. For these students, typing involves real problems in literacy and numeracy, both in spelling, and spacing and layout in tabulation.

On my second visit, the class was planning their trip to the Broome Pearl Festival. Part of their responsibility on the trip was to look after younger children. This was a very relaxed lesson, where the students talked more freely and at greater length than in any other class visited, except the project class.

Year 8 English writing. I wanted to get some idea of what the best class could do. It's always very difficult to report on written work; texts provide the only way of seeing, but texts without contexts cannot be interpreted.

So, some subjective impressions:

- *Assignments are on themes (animals in this case); a dozen very varied items; plenty of continuous personal and imaginative writing - poem, conversation with a pet, reflections, book review ('Storm Boy') ten descriptions of mystery animals - word games - mythical beasts to be looked up in the library. Emphasis on continuous writing, not snippets. The various items had to be collected into a 'book-life form' with a title page.*
- *Presentation. Outstanding. All the work was beautifully and carefully presented. Obvious enjoyment in taking care, getting words right, spelling and punctuation, using colour, drawing, painting, lay-out, etc.*
- *Quality (apart from presentation) Variable; some excellent, some weak; big range of ability.*

INTERVIEWS WITH SPECIALIST TEACHERS

Science teacher

The teacher was an American who had taught in U.S.A. and Australia. He works in a two-man team with the maths teacher, is active in the N.W. teachers' in-service committee, and organized a course on teaching science for the area. He sees literacy as a basic aim of science teaching. He said, about English:

> *I don't think you can consider English as a particular subject, you know. We try to consider it here as English as a part of science, part of maths ... in any class it's language we are teaching. I think it's a greater problem here because the students do not have the vocabulary, they do not have the background, they do not have the mass media. I think we might see a change when TV comes ...*

Interviewer: *Do you attempt to teach them words that belong to science?*

Teacher: *Yes, and I think the Principal was on to a good thing last year. We all agreed to stress literacy and numeracy and the body that we teach in science is probably superfluous to these two aims ... I think there has been a vast improvement up here because of it ... though you have to teach them on a day-to-day basis because of the irregularity of their attendance, though last year we had a big change. In 1976 74% came to school; but 92% came last year. So there's been quite a big change in attitude, and because they're coming to school they're learning more.*

We went on to develop his ideas about the importance of continuity in developing literacy.

> *There's one thing about the primary school. We have had some real, real class teachers in the last three years, so there has been a great improvement. When you look at the high school we're looking at kids*

from outlying schools that haven't had that background. They go to the hostel here. These are the kids we have the problems with. Almost every A stream student has come directly from this school.

Interviewer: *It's very hard to be able to spot what it is that's making progress happen.*

Teacher: *I think we're on the right track here with the thematic approach, and lots of visual resource material, and out in the open air. It's outdoor activities that break down the barrier with the students. Once you've done that you can tackle the learning. I'm convinced that probably the best thing I ever did in school, here, is to take these kids out every Thursday. Out there you're a god. They worship you on a basket-ball court. They listen to you. They're watching. They concentrate because they want to learn. You can teach them all the skills. We have plenty of things we can do in the open air - canoeing and camping. That's the type of thing we should base our curriculum more around. Really I think teachers should sit back and be 'aids' to the students. You should have the body of knowledge, but let them fiddle around, and come up and ask you 'What's this?' or 'Why this?' Then you tell them 'It works like this.'*

Interviewer: *What do you think about 'pushing'?*

Teacher: *I think there's a time to push and a time when you can't push. They aren't ready and its useless. There's a time to push and a time to develop their own responsibility.*

English teacher

- About teaching at this school she said:

> *One of the best moves I ever made in my life was to come here, which is really a strange way of doing it. But if you can experience something like this you really work out your standards as a teacher and as a person ... and this place has really changed my outlook on teacher-student relationships...*

Interviewer: *Was this your first job?*

S.E.: *Here? No. In my normal school down south I don't think I would have been that eager to try things out. I found those kids less responsive than these ones, so you find out pretty quickly what works and what doesn't with these kids. That's why I particularly like it here.*

- About the primary school teachers, she said:

> *Another thing I found I need specifically... and that is I could use the primary teachers a lot. Although you are an English specialist, not many teachers in that area have been trained to undertake remedial programmes. In an area such as this your primary teachers are better equipped than your secondary English teachers ... so I can*

> *watch Bill's group and work out what sort of remedial programme he's using with his kids, and then adjust that for the secondary kids who need remedial work. Most English teachers are trained for the ordinary run-of-the-mill class, where, hopefully, everybody is average or above average, but they're not trained for the below-average child.*

- About reading, she said:

> *It's hard to find an interest that's common to all of them. They are so diverse. The books that John is making up in the project class are good. The kids might take a trip out to M——— River as a class. Then they write about it. He takes the photographs and puts them on the page and they all do their writing underneath them ... That's the thing that gets them wanting to read. Most times if you say to my B class, 'It's free reading time', they will go and get an Aboriginal publication, which has stories and photographs in it and these kids might know the kids in the photograph, or they might know the area - it might look like students at Fitzroy Crossing .... Also I put up work from all the kids on the walls ... not just the best ... and if the kids have a free moment they go down and read them.*

- About standards across the curriculum, she said:

> *I think it is reasonably important that some of the English standards are expected in the other subjects ... I think those basic sort of things can be undertaken by any teacher who has to correct written work ... At my other schools, one especially, the English Department made a point of mentioning to the other subject teachers that it would greatly aid English in the school - the general standard - if they maintained the same standards as the English teachers do. Then the point was brought up, 'Well, what about spelling?' Because most of the people involved in the other subject areas couldn't spell either, so it caused a bit of a problem. It helps because, when it comes to reports and things like that, a lot of the other subject-area teachers aren't aware of spelling, because they aren't aware of it in everyday classroom situations. Consequently, when you get teachers making reports you come across this huge spelling problem, which needn't occur if they were more aware of spelling problems in the classroom everyday.*

- About the library, she said:

> *Anne has done a really good job down there. She's listed all the books under various themes, so if I'm doing a particular theme, I ask her to get all those books together and then I take them up to the classroom. I look after the tickets, who has the book and all that sort of thing.*

Interviewer:	*Do the kids take the books home?*
S.E.:	*My kids tend to leave the books in their classroom. They don't usually take them home.*
Interviewer:	*Actually, Anne says they do more than you think and she says she loses a lot; but she says you can't have a library and not lose some books. You just try to maintain it as best you can.*

- About the BSE, she said:

> *The 9A BSE stream need to have a BSE level in case they go down south. With the Bs, the main reason we've kept those B-stream kids still in the BSE is because we haven't had anything else to offer them ... We haven't come up with a course for those kids yet. With regard to the comparability test, not every kid is going to be at the same level for every task they are required to do in English. For instance, you find that your lower-ability groups most times come up better on a creative drama type of approach than do some of your really fluent writers ... I would like the system to be*

> *a little more flexible. Some of our kids couldn't read the test, but if you could interpret the questions to them, and ask them to give an oral interpretation of the question, I think they would score a lot higher than solely relying on reading ability, which the BSE seems to do ... When we had the guidance people up here testing these kids, they found that some of them were achieving a lot higher on an oral level.*

- Presentation of work was important to her.

> *It's the sort of care that's taken with how things are proposed, and how they are presented ... I think the way they actually give it to you and compose it reflects how much pride they take in their work.*

- About teacher development, she said:

> *You need in-service courses with your metropolitan teachers as well, because, although you're here now, most teachers only spend a couple of years, maybe a little longer, before they move somewhere else. So I think it's important for you to keep in contact with what's happening in the rest of the State, not only in the Kimberleys. You can become so isolated and pedantic in your thinking that you don't realize what's happening elsewhere, what sort of ideas are generating elsewhere, the various directions that English is taking in schools; and you can get, especially if you are the only specialist teacher in your area, locked in your thinking, less divergent in your thinking ... So I think in-service courses of whatever nature are really good.*

•

PRINCIPALS' REGIONAL CONFERENCE

A talk was given by the Regional Superintendent, focusing on disadvantaged schools and the need for change. (All the Kimberley region should be classified as disadvantaged, in his view.) He gave a brief account of St Mary's school at B——, where the sisters had 'looked at their disadvantaged kids and decided to turn their school upside down.' This was five years ago. They had all the problems, especially no learning. They reckoned they couldn't do worse than they were doing. In effect they created a 'sub school' out of the pre-school and Years 1 and 2, with five, six or seven teachers in an open education situation. There was no formal teaching at all, and movement out of and back to the pre-school was made according to progress or difficulty that the students had. The way the work developed was similar to that done in the project classes.

The ideas behind these attempts to provide both a better and a more relevant education in the North-West depended on

- The importance of the pre-school both in starting and in re-inforcing learning.

- The integration of the pre-school and Years 1 and 2. This meant, in effect, open-type education in these years, and close team-work for the teachers working with these groups.

- The notion of 'bridging' programmes to help the Aboriginal children achieve literacy and numeracy. The teacher at D—— constantly referred to 'streaming', but the idea of bridging carries with it differences of content and of ways of working. Streaming is merely a device for sorting students into similar levels of ability.

He then touched on problems of staffing, and emphasized that a sub-school couldn't be set up without an experienced teacher in charge, and suggested the need for developing the *good* local teacher.

About language development he asked, 'Do you teach it as a second language with a lot of drills, or like a first language with an emphasis on *using* it? Whatever people did, he thought not enough use was made of music, art, drama, puppets and plays as ways of introducing and using language, especially talk.

The six principals, after a day's discussion on their own, joined the Superintendent to discuss their recommendations, which he undertook to pass on to the Education Department. In summary they were about

- Their desperate need for more experienced teachers.
- Their equal desperate need for more continuity of staff, one or two years being the average length of stay. This meant, in turn,
- Tackling permanency and promotion issues.
- A more realistic policy with regard to the appointment of young first-year teachers. They needed proper preparation before coming up to the North, and help by colleagues and senior staff when they got there, re-inforced by in-service courses run through the regional funds. They would also like the Aboriginal Education Branch to assist in their selection.

Good staff continuity and teacher education were essential parts of the picture if the kinds of changes discussed were to be developed.

But the problems remain, though the improvements referred to by teacher after teacher at D—— (and the parents) suggest some of the directions in which progress can come.

FROM THE OBSERVER'S NOTEBOOK (ADDENDUM)

The School of the Air

West Kimberley Unit. Range 960 kilometres. Other units are located at Port Hedland, Meekatharra and Kalgoorlie.

Looked in on the School of the Air out of mere curiosity. It's not part of the district high school, but just happens to be located there. Returned to it every day, fascinated. No one in the school knows anything about it, yet I saw some of the best teaching I have seen anywhere.

It is not just a broadcasting system. It is a radio-communication system that establishes first-class communication between teachers, pupils and their home supervisors (parents mostly). It operates by courtesy of the Flying Doctor Service, having a share of its air-time, so lessons are relatively sparse and only twenty minutes long. A great virtue!

There are two teacher-tutors and one itinerant teacher visiting the kids in their homes, often staying one night, and working with them and their supervisors, teaching both. All three are trained and experienced primary teachers. Some thirty-five kids and their parents are enrolled in Years 1-7. There is a weekend camp seminar for teachers, students and parents. Transport is by charter plane paid for with cash raised from raffles and bazaars.

The teacher-tutors in the outfit fully exploited the 'two-way-ness' of their medium. Call-up and 'good morning' establishes individual contact and reply. Each child

- Has prepared something to tell, (home news, or about his library book) to read and to ask.

- Expects to make a spontaneous response to a speculative question from the teacher.

- Engages in writing or making a book or a model co-operatively.

You can't waste any words in a twenty-minute period of individual tuition with six to nine students. The careful preparation by all concerned is part of the quality. Each child gets some talking, listening, reading and writing, and variations within these modes. But this could be true of many class lessons. There was a different quality about these co-operative learning communications carried out by radio, mail, library service and personal visits.

What was the nature of the differences? Could any of the quality be transferred to ordinary classrooms?

- Perhaps one answer lies in the fact that in this situation the speakers are real audiences, making genuine acts of communication. The teacher does not know what happened at the race meeting; neither does she know what questions the kids are going to ask her or each other. They are genuine questions.

- There seems to be a performance element arising from the radio medium. The teacher often sang a song, said poems or read stories, and read them as a good performer. The kids respond to this - no doubt fancy themselves as voices on the air, and speak and read with bravura. This cuts out the shyness and fear of being wrong or foolish in a big class in the physical presence of their peers and teacher.

- Very skilful variations within the modes of telling, reading and writing. I noticed

  Short utterances in response to questions or practical matters.
  A lot of extended utterances (home news, accounts of books they were reading, and the re-telling of stories.
  Self-initiated questions and utterances.
  Reading aloud as a performer rather than a testee.
  Radio communication is a slower process than ordinary face-to-face conversation, yet each child knows he will be called on, so has time to 'prepare' what he wants to say - a delaying procedure, as in writing, which profoundly affects processes.

- Kids are drawn into working co-operatively on stories (initially through the radio lesson), which they finish individually and send in. These are referred to in the morning 'news' time, and circulated to all the group. i.e. the active, real audience is again a powerful factor.

Some notes of lessons to flesh out these abstractions:

Year Two (6 years; 3 girls, 3 boys)

The teacher began by calling each of them up and waiting for their reply. She speculated about where absentees might be - gone to Perth or helping with mustering? Thus communication was established between each child and the others as they listened to each other's responses.

She sang a song ('Little Brown Jug'), focusing attention and being pleasurable.

A short round of home news (house-moving, 10 baby pigs born, etc.) Some probing questions asked to get more extended utterances.

Heard the reading of three children. Asked Christopher to begin and to ask two questions about what he had read. The other children were to answer them. He began loud and clear: 'My book is called "The Three Brothers".'

After the answers to his questions she asked if anyone would like that book to be sent them when Christopher turned it in. (Note: The book reviews are functional here, not just exercises.) Two other children reported on their books. She followed up each of these 'library news' items with reflective-type questions: 'Why do you suppose he did that?' or 'What would you have done?'

She reminded them to bring their 'sound' sheets the next day for spelling.

Year Four (8-9 years) The second teacher

Call up and 'Good Morning'.

Home news. Asked William to tell about the best part of the Halls Creek races. Drew him out when he stuck at being monosyllabic. Ditto Sonya. Got them using their language about their experiences.

Said he was going to read a story with some American words in it. They were to try to spot them; then they would discuss what they might mean. They could work this out because they were all in a story about a traffic jam. ('Turnpike', 'gas-pedal', etc.)

He went on to ask them about cats. Collected from them sayings such as 'Like a cat on hot bricks', etc. What might they mean?

Read them Rosalie Moore's poem:

Catalogue

Cats walk thin
Cats sleep fat
Cats when they jump
Are sleek
As a grape
Slipping its skin;
Cats wait
In a lump
Then jump.
In a streak.

Began reading 'The Cat That Walked by Himself' (Kipling). To be continued as a serial.

(Note the interplay between getting them absorbed in the stories and poems, and getting them aware of the special meaning of special words and phrases.)

He reminded them that the next day was spelling and to bring their 'sound' sheets.

CASE STUDY 4—SMALL METROPOLITAN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

REASONS FOR SELECTION

This school was asked to participate in the study as it was a small metropolitan school (about 600 students) covering the full range from Years 8-12 and was considered to be located in a relatively affluent area. However, it was found, in discussion with the Principal and the Senior Master of English, that many students attending the school do not come from affluent families, and that the intake includes two large State Housing Commission areas. In his interview, the Principal described the economic and educational background of the students in this way:

> *I think about half of them come from homes in which the parents are professional or semi-professional in occupation. Some of them are in service industries like transport; they have their own business. Many of these have both parents employed. Some of them are self-employed; some are workers and tradesmen. There would be very few casual labourers, I would estimate, except amongst the young and single. There are a large number of one-parent families; an estimate of the number would be of the order of one-third.*
>
> *In amongst the first half, a good many would have a keen interest in education and are keen to give their children the best they can. We feel that they do support the school by reinforcing what we're trying to do for the most part.*

The Principal went on to say that because parents had a number of alternatives open to them, in the way of independent schools and Government schools with special music, art or ballet classes, it was reasonable to assume that students in upper school attended the school by choice rather than necessity.

STAFFING

A feature of staffing in Western Australian schools is that there are frequently unavoidable staff changes during the year. Secondly, a proportion of English teachers in Western Australia have gained their qualifications in other countries or other States. Such a situation can make it difficult for a school English department to develop and maintain an agreed policy on the teaching and learning of English. In this school, two staff changes had occurred during the year, and three of the eight English teachers had gained their qualifications outside Western Australia. Although most of the staff were qualified and experienced English teachers, there were some quite strongly differing views about the teaching and learning of English on the staff.

The experience and qualifications of the teachers who participated in the study were as follows:

Senior Master:	M.ED, BA, Higher Certificate (W.A.). Extensive teaching experience in Western Australia; senior master for 15 years - six in this school - and one year's teaching experience in England.

Teacher 1: BA (English major) Dip.Ed.(Victoria). Four years' teaching experience in Victoria, two months in another W.A. senior high school; employed third term in this school.

Teacher 2: B.Ed. (English major), Higher Certificate (W.A.). Experienced in teaching English in both country and metropolitan schools.

Teacher 3: Teachers' Certificate (major in art and craft, U.K.). Middle school English teaching in U.K., special class and primary teaching in W.A., last four years teaching secondary English in W.A.

Teacher 4: B.A., Postgraduate Certificate in Education (English and Phys.Ed., U.K.). Teaching experience in English and phys.ed. (U.K.). Brief (two weeks) teaching experience in this school.

Remedial Teacher: ASDA, Higher Certificate, Dip. Teach., Learning Assistance Teacher Course (W.A.). Eight years' teaching experience, including English, spoken English, history and geography (Years 8-10). Four years' remedial reading teaching.

WHO DECIDES WHAT ENGLISH SHALL BE?

The school is strongly oriented towards examinations. In the interview, the Principal explained that from the time that the school had been upgraded, parents and students were strongly committed to tertiary entrance:

Principal: *Our up-grading (to a senior high school) took place in 1972. There was some contention, because in those days the Department didn't automatically upgrade schools when they completed Year 10. You had to establish a sufficient likely number of candidates for Year 11. We were able to establish that number...*

By 1973 we presented our first lot of TAE candidates and we've presented those ever since. Of the original students continuing into Year 11, almost all sought tertiary admission... This year, all but two have lodged a joint application for tertiary admission courses ... for tertiary admission is mainly what we cater for in the upper school.

The students had not enrolled for non-TAE subjects, even though the school was prepared to offer that opportunity.

The emphasis on examinations was seen as a restraint because of the imposed syllabus and external exam format:

Senior Master, English: *In upper school, we must gear our work to the public exam, the TAE or the BSE Certificate of Secondary Education. That is, in English, a great restraint on the materials I can choose, and set down for teachers to use in their classes. The textbooks*

> *have to be useful for, eventually, the examination that is set. Most of the examinations have a list of books from which the teachers may select. There is freedom, yet there is a constraint there, and I sometimes feel something different would help, but it isn't going to help them when they get to the exam situation. Therefore, we must not do it - or we shouldn't do it, is my other feeling. Perhaps we should, but nevertheless we don't.*

The Senior Master of English provides a course outline for all English courses, Years 8-12. When this was issued and discussed at the beginning of the year, the Senior Master emphasized that it was 'suggestive' rather than 'prescriptive' and was to serve as a checklist. In the introductory comments, the Senior Master says:

> *Teachers are given freedom to teach in what they consider to be the most appropriate, effective ways to achieve all the course objectives.*

The course outlines in the same handout indicate what English activities might be attempted each week of the term (except for one to two periods per week), down to detailing the number of periods per week, on an average, that might be spent on a particular activity, or on a particular text, to give a balanced approach to an English programme.

It is suggested that five periods per week be spent on the source books, essay, comprehension, grammar and vocabulary exercises (concentrating mainly on common errors of students, teaching to the point of error) and SRA reading laboratories in Year 8. Thus one period per week seems to remain of fiction and non-fiction in class, although teachers are advised to encourage students to read regularly and widely. Spoken English was time-tabled for a separate period, and was sometimes taken by a teacher other than the normal class teacher.

Teachers of Year 11 classes are to spend Week 1 of first term

Collecting and storing SRA booklets for later use.

Getting to know individual students.

Discussing class courtesies, e.g. sitting at the front of the room.

Reading out and discussing course requirements.

Explaining homework principles (at least 2½ hours per week) and showing students how to draw up a home-study timetable.

Issuing script books and paper.

Checking that students have correct texts.

Explicit suggestions are also given about which units of work should be completed from *Mastering English* (**Wheeler** and **Walshe**). Essays are suggested at least once per fortnight, and teachers put emphasis on formality of expression, proof-reading and fluency (at least ten words per minute, allowing time for thinking, planning and checking). Work to be done from *Breakaway*, by Watts and Grono, is similarly detailed, emphasizing methods of effective communication, persuasive techniques, words and imagery, allusion and argument. Short stories are to be treated in the first seven weeks, with emphasis on the writer's theme and its effective communication.

The course outline is similarly detailed on the study of poetry, contemporary Australian essays and SRA reading laboratories. A similar pattern persists for second and third term, except that one novella is to be treated in class. There is a reminder to encourage students to read more widely.

In Year 12, time allocation was recommended as follows:

2 periods per week:	*Using Better English* (Allsopp & Hunt) for comprehension language usage, composition, as well as one multiple-choice test (duplicated sheets).
1 period per week:	*Spectrum Two* (Bennett, Cowan, Hay) short stories.
1 period per week:	*Mainly Modern* (Colmer) poetry.
2 periods per week:	Reading and discussion of prose writing, e.g. *The Fatal Impact, The Grapes of Wrath, Ten Articulate Men, The Loved One, Future Shock.*

The Senior Master pointed out that the areas to be covered each term were suggested to allow common tests and to facilitate the setting of upper school term examinations.

Although there are no external examinations to prepare for, a similar kind of programme guide operates in Years 8-10. This is to allow transfer of students from one class or subset of classes to another (during the year if necessary), and to allow for across-the-board tests twice a term in lower school, as requested by English teachers earlier in the year. The aims of lower-school English in the course outline are taken from the First Year English Teachers' Guide (1970) and focus on the developmental and attitudinal aspects of English teaching; they explicitly recommend liberalizing classroom practices so that individual students can be better catered for. There is freedom for teachers to pursue these aims in first term for Year 8. The second-term programme concentrates two-thirds of the time available on SRA and *Word Usage in Secondary Schools* and leaves two periods per week for reading (apart from SRA) writing, talking, drama and any other activities that the individual teacher may consider desirable.

Programmes of work are required by Education Department superintendents and by most school principals. To assist teachers in meeting these demands, the Senior Master suggested that the following format could be used to outline proposed lessons. (The given details are from one teachers' programme of work.)

YEAR 8 TERM 2

WEEK	PERIOD 1	PERIOD 2	PERIOD 3	PERIOD 4	PERIOD 5	PERIOD 6
1	SRA Goalsetting. Starting-level guide.	SRA work through SQ3R Record Books.	SRA First Power Builders. Explain score cards.	Word Usage, Assignment 7. B: Interest in words.	*Sandals in One Hand.* Class discussion on danger and disaster.	Composition, 'My Most Frightening Experience'.

2	SRA Power Builders.	SRA Power Builders.	SRA Introduce Rate Builders. Do Three.	Word Usage, Assignment 7C, Power of Words. Slang Expressions.	*Sandals in One Hand.* Read 'Death of an Aircraft'. Answer questions, p. 39.	Write a poem or a drama script based on 'Death of an Aircraft'.

In the interests of comparability and meeting the requirements of the Board of Secondary Education, there are across-the-board tests twice per term in lower school for reading comprehension and composition, as well as a defined assessment model.

The Senior Master emphasized that the course and programme outlines were only suggestions. In a structured interview, one teacher described the programming and assessment system in this way:

> *Yes, we are told here what course we must cover and we are told, in quite detail, what sections of grammar, what sections of literature, whatever, we must do. We are told what topics we must cover each term and we are told how the term's marking system will be organized, and so at the end of the term you are expected to fill out these beautiful mark sheets - six or seven marks out of ten for written, one mark for oral discussion, one mark out of ten for drama, one mark out of something else for something else, so that it is a nice tally out of 100% and that will be the child's term mark.*

The teachers perceived the course outlines to be more prescriptive than the Senior Master apparently intended them to be.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR INDIVIDUAL TEACHERS?

In this section of the case study, selections have been made for individual teacher's self-descriptions, and interviews conducted with them to give as clear a picture as possible of their view of English teaching and the way it is affected in this school. We have focused on responses which indicate attitudes to the content and method of English teaching, to students and their learning, to the Board of Secondary Education and the Tertiary Admissions Examination and the attendant systems of marking and assessment, and what it is that the teacher values most highly in his/her work. These emphases were chosen because they were those which concerned the teachers most in their structured interviews. The Senior Master's comments have been identified as such, because of the influence that his views have on other English teachers.

The Senior Master pointed out that decisions about the selection of books for the following year were discussed at English staff meetings in September or October each year and that texts were changed if the staff asked for different books. English staff meetings, time-tabled once per week, were also used to discuss English department policy and to report on senior staff meetings and proposed school activities.

WHAT IS ENGLISH?

When asked about the aims of English, the Senior Master referred to the school English department document below:

THE AIMS OF THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

1. ENGLISH, LOWER SCHOOL (Years 8-10)
   Revised at a staff meeting 10th October, 1978

GENERAL:
By developing effective communication, make a major contribution to the general educational aim of fostering the intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual growth of each student.

BROAD AIMS:
1. To give students, through literature, media, excursions, practical activities, interaction between people, opportunities for written expression and discussion:

   (a) an enriched and deeper understanding of their own experiences and those of others;
   (b) a fuller appreciation and enjoyment of their environment and participation in community activities;
   (c) and a developed sensitivity and imagination.

2. To develop the students' powers of communication - their ability to observe, think, listen, read, speak and write effectively.

OBJECTIVES:
1. In pursuing these aims, the teacher makes a substantial contribution to the growth of each student by developing in him/her:

   (a) a thoughtful attitude on questions of personal behaviour and social responsibility (emphasizing the school rules of courtesy, consideration and punctuality);
   (b) an understanding and tolerance of others;
   (c) critical attitudes towards change, and a readiness and abilities to accept and cope with change;
   (d) skills of self education;
   (e) a willingness to develop and work at his/her optimum rate (by providing for individual differences and allowing individual progress):
   (f) and a pride in using English skills correctly and in the presentation of work.

2. The teacher in the classroom should:

   (a) create a class environment in which these aims may be pursued with good prospects of success;
   (b) and develop a class which acknowledges and makes use of individual differences of individual ability, interests and maturity in students.

3. In pursuing these aims, the teacher is to cater purposefully for all levels of ability in heterogeneous classes so that all students are extended and experience a sense of achievement.

THE OBJECTIVE OF ASSESSMENT:
Continuous assessment of all students over all the objectives of English teaching is made:

(a) to promote the most appropriate methods of English teaching;
(b) to provide incentive or extrinsic motivation for students to work;
(c) to give reliable information about the students' development;
(d) to complement the day-to-day evaluation of lesson objectives;
(e) to maintain adequate comparability of standards between teachers, levels and years.

SPECIFIC AIMS AND INTERMEDIATE GOALS OR BEHAVIOURAL OBJECTIVES:
Methodology, class organization and content (to some extent) for each class are left to the professional judgement of individual teachers.

In their interviews and self descriptions, staff participating expressed the following opinions.

Senior Master: *I see the secondary school's role as building on the basic skills of English taught in primary schools.*

From primary schools, I expect that most students can read close to the norms for their age, spell commonly used words, can punctuate (at least to the point of putting a full stop at the end of every sentence) and have some sense of the paragraph. They should be able to speak in generally accepted grammatical patterns.

In secondary school, I would like to develop (as the students mature) deeper reading and appreciation.

As an extension of these statements about English, the Senior Master went on to make remarks of a more general kind:

The most valuable thing that students take from the school are the lasting values of diligence, pride in good standards of presentation of work, courtesy, consideration for others, punctuality (planning use of time effectively) and enjoyment of reading (and/or debating, film-making or film-viewing, drama, etc.) for leisure.

However, in Year 12, the direct requirements for the TAE/CSE exam papers must be emphasized. In any class I expect each student to work to capacity at the best level they can do.

Teacher 1: *I think it's a pity there is a subject called English taught in schools, because it tends to give too many people the opportunity to do something totally unrelated to language, or at least the theory of how people learn.*

I think in dealing with language, all experience becomes very important. I think that experiencing *and through discussions and language, sharing experiences, there is a very meaningful thing. I suppose that's the main view I have about the relevance of literature in English... I haven't really sorted out my view of that yet, but I sort of feel that literature can be used in many ways.*

It can be used mostly to help kids experience things which they may never be able to experience. Certainly nothing like first-hand experience, but it does help them in many ways, I think, to see other people's points of view and things like that.

I think some ways it is helpful to them is to look at the way people say certain things and to become aware of the subtleties involved in language; but I see literature as being a static way of coming to terms with things, experiencing things. I'm not sure quite, but it's certainly more a two-way thing than watching TV, but it tends not to have that same exchange and sharing that basic discussion and interaction does. I hate to think that that means I am dismissing literature as not really being worth much, because I certainly don't think that. I think that it is a very important thing - well, I don't know, just a basic activity or whatever of enjoying language and enjoying exploring other people's ideas and concepts and experiencing the Wessex countryside and the prisoners' loss of freedom, like something in 'Hard Rock'. I'd hate to say that literature is only a tool by which we develop our language. I think it can be seen very much as a toy as well.

Teacher 2: *Personal language really concerns me because so much of their personal language, their thinking and their talking relates to their own self-esteem, their own self-awareness. And, unless they can handle that language happily, I can't see that they can relate to much of the personal language that is in writing. And I feel that their awareness of themselves and their sensitivity to other people just has to come through that personal language... So often you are asking them to read... pieces of literature or read other people's expression, and you're asking them to relate to it and they can't relate to it at all if they haven't had some sort of experience - if you don't make them aware of their own experiences. In writing they are drawing on their own experiences all the time, and in oral discussion, we try to draw as much from them as they are ready to give so that they are sharing their own ideas, expressing them and being receptive to other people's ideas. Now that to me is one of the crucial points of teaching English.*

Teacher 3: *To me English is very individual communication between a teacher and a child. When I really search my mind as to my aims I try to first of all primarily foster a love of the English language. I try to be aware of each student in my room and try to reach that student* *at his or her own level, not the level I determine, or the level I imagine, but the actual level of the child. I try to provide an environment which is pleasant, enjoyable and where the relationship is a good one. The students can effectively communicate whatever they feel, or think, or doubt, or see, or fear, or regard as important or unimportant.*

In lower-school English I tend to maintain a good standard of the written word. Some people think that to stop children writing affects their continuity. I don't believe this. I feel that a good, basic set of mechanical rules for grammar should be obtained as soon as possible, so that the child can forget about what's needed to express himself and just get on with the job.

Teacher 4: *In the fifteen years or so since I started secondary education I can already note a few definite changes in regards to teaching of English. It has become much more flexible and open, using the world and its everyday life to stimulate thinking and language. The straight and narrow path from file to textbook and back has disappeared. Of this, I heartily approve. The textbook is now the 'sourcebook' and is also more flexible and open, using suggestions and stimuli rather than hard-and-fast rules of language.*

Language and literature are two clearly dominant strands in English teaching, and some of the teachers went on to develop their ideas on this more fully. On the language issue, Teacher 1 said:

> *I disapprove very much of books such as 'Using Better English' (Allsopp and Hunt) and especially for Year 12 kids, quite apart from anyone else. I think it's an abomination, and at an age when I think it is really important for kids to learn to enjoy using language. I think something like 'Word Usage' (an Education Department publication), which I have only used once, is horrifying. It treats language totally out of any sort of context and I just don't believe that there is any place for teaching language in that way. Actually, that is teaching English - it's not teaching language or encouraging the development of language in thinking.*
>
> *I think the only relevant way of teaching English is using it. I don't see any point whatsoever in vocabulary exercises, punctuation exercises and that whole range of so-called important things unless they have importance and relevance for those who are learning it, and I don't see that learned out of any meaningful context they can be important. I find the tendency of people to think that, given five sheets of grammar, that they will know how to do it at the end. Terribly depressing, and I think it must be - well, obviously those people, they must feel great frustration, and yet I can't understand why they don't change.*
>
> *I think the thing about using English is that obviously at some stage you have to deal with and help kids become aware of such things as paragraphs, commas and more precise spelling, but I really don't think there is any point where I would say that kids should spend more time studying than using.*

This teacher felt that the emphasis on study of language had an adverse influence on the student's ability to write:

> *I am very concerned that they have used English so little or they have used language so little - that they paragraph, and punctuate and they basically know where to put a semi-colon and things like that, but they can't think. They've used the language so little that they can go through passages and passages and quite beautifully sort out the more obvious grammatical points, but they can't think. They can write very elaborate and high-sounding things which mean absolutely nothing ...*
>
> *They have a broad vocabulary, but I think they would be far better off having used or developed that vocabulary by using English rather than sitting down and doing vocabulary exercises, because one of the very obvious things that happens is that they try to use a word that they have learnt in vocabulary exercises, to go with the concept that they haven't talked through, and their writing, particularly, becomes very confused...*
>
> *I'm finding it particularly hard here, because the kids have been learning all these things about the different types of writing they should be able to do... You know, most forms of writing are just like mathematical formulae. I can run off about five foolscap pages of formulas for the business letter, for the acceptance, the invitation letter, for all those sorts of things, and the kid could file them away and use them in the future, and then that's enough of that. But we seem to be expected to make the kids practise, practise and practise - something that means nothing to them at this stage.*

Teacher 3 has changed her attitude to language over a long period of teaching:

> *I've changed my mind over the years. When I first began teaching in 1954 certain periods were set aside when I would teach specific rules and do the exercises. Over the years I tried not to do this for several reasons. I've tried to make the grammar incidental, but nevertheless still very important. Anything that triggers off a child's imagination and sets off any kind of reaction I try to get into writing. But before all writing, language is the most important part of my lessons. I feel that everyone must express themselves orally, before they even attempt to pick up the pen. Everything is talked and discussed and I find this a very valuable thing.*

Teacher 4 felt that the greater freedom in English teaching could lead to disregard for correct language usage:

> *I thoroughly approve of stimulating ideas and creative thinking, but we must not ignore the correct usage of the language we employ to do so. The poor old full stop, capital letter and correct spelling are essential to convey these ideas. By all means aim for a masterpiece but don't forget the presentation. Both are of equal and prime importance. I, therefore, set aside at least one lesson a week for vocabulary and language work (I don't like the term 'grammar') and these lessons are priceless.*

Teacher 3 saw language and literature as closely related, especially in Years 11 and 12:

> *A great part of the study in upper school - the language and literature - is all tied up into one. I really don't feel you can separate both. To attempt to foster a love of words generally - a feeling for words, mood and atmosphere created... Of course, at the same time skills are still being built - how to present an argument, what form of writing, what style what language do I use? All these things are going on at the same time.*

Teacher 4 saw literature as central to English teaching:

> *There is no greater asset to English lessons than literature itself. We should encourage students to enjoy literature as a whole, for what it says and how it is said. That is, we can enjoy the story, share the experiences and appreciate its literary qualities. We can also use literature as a model - how ideas can be conveyed and language used.*
>
> *It is a task to teach anything that is not enjoyable, or has not some element of pleasure. Therefore the students' own interests must often generally be considered, particularly in the choice of literature. In conjunction with the general study of literature, there is nothing better than a visit to a theatre or cinema to see a full production.*

THE ROLE OF STUDENTS

In the structured interviews, teachers were asked about the importance of the students' opinions, ideas and attitudes in the teaching and learning of English. Again, there was a diversity of opinion and perception. The Senior Master said:

> *I find that attitudes are the things that govern whether the students work, whether they work to capacity, try to develop their skills, capabilities, or just sit back and do nothing. You've most probably heard the term 'boring' used quite a lot in the school. I think quite often it's an escape clause for students who wish to give their attention to other subjects - students who find that English is so different that they don't understand its various needs...*
>
> *So their attitudes are very important, and we try to select materials which we feel that they would be interested in looking at... But it's very hard to ask them what they want to study, because then it would be impossible to get a consensus and to get textbooks which in the practical situation in the classroom the teacher could use. I think it's impossible for English teachers to cater in practice for every individual difference, giving everyone the subject that they want to study at that particular moment. There must be a common core of thought, work and discussion, based on a source book or theme or something. They are generally suggested by Curriculum Branch, or by the public exams authorities, and we're restricted in the... ones that we can select.*

Teacher 2 also found that her students influenced her development as an English teacher:

> *I would think that the greatest influence for me is the minds of the children that I'm teaching, because the teaching of English is such a personal thing, and I think that what's happening in their minds and*

> *what's going on in their minds is what influences me most of all. How they react to different things, how they react to each other... The greatest thing is using the children's responses - you know, to me literary units where you have children responding and getting excited. That really makes me feel great, and I think oral discussions work where there is plenty of interaction between the students. I really like that.*

This teacher translated her belief in the value of students' ideas into small group interactions in the classroom.

> *In the classroom, the small groupings, the sharing of ideas in small groupings seems to me to sort out, to help sort out in the children's minds what they really think... If the children speak and talk and share ideas in that small group - if not in front of you, where they might say something that other people will laugh at, but just amongst their peer group - it seems to me that it crystallizes for themselves what they are on about, and also it helps each of them understand maybe new things about that topic. If their friends have got different ideas they will listen to it and they will think 'Ah, ha, there's a new thing'...*
>
> *And I think that, for dealing with larger classes, if you are going to make it an idea time in English where they are sharing ideas, you can't put them into the small groups; you have to allow them to move into their own small groups, because if the point of it all is the sharing and crystallizing, it won't happen in a group in which the child feels uncomfortable. And so, to me, the small grouping works if they organize their own groups.*

Teacher 1 also felt that the interests and intentions of the students had considerable influence on what takes place in her classroom:

> *I think the most important influences on me have always been the kids. I think that's the only place where any reasonable information about the sorts of things you should be dealing with can be obtained.*
>
> *I believe very firmly that kids have to learn in their own time when they are ready, and that it's useless and quite damaging in many cases to force something on them before they are ready for it. I've found the most meaningful things have happened because kids have shown real signs of being ready to do something. I think that the way kids learn and how language is developed are two such closely related things that it's impossible to separate them.*

The Senior Master pointed out that the Education Department policy of chronological promotion made it very difficult to gear a class situation to individual readiness, when staffing, rooms, timetabling and other factors did not allow for cross-setting of all English classes in a particular year. The English classes in this school are heterogeneously arranged, and often timetabled in a year at different times.

Teacher 1, while recognizing the administrative difficulties, stressed the importance of maximizing student involvement in planning what will happen in English lessons:

> *I think more than anything else as far as the things I do in the classroom are concerned, the most meaningful things are those which have come out of waiting to see what the kids want to do.*

> *I don't mean that I sit there and let chaos reign until something arrives, because I think that my responsibility is to try and draw together the strings of what's happening, and perhaps show them a number of directions that they have arrived at themselves but perhaps were unaware of. I don't think I ever had anything meaningful come out of a totally directed lesson or programme.*
>
> *I don't think I've ever had any writing worth a pinch of salt on anything that's my subject and not theirs... The reading test or the writing tests we have been doing at this school, they seem to be absolutely pointless. The kids in First Year (Year 8) are already learning a technique that they will probably use if and when they ever get around to doing a TAE. They are becoming limited at such an early age to glib and meaningless things that they seem to feel teachers want. I am finding it very hard to value their own experiences.*
>
> *It's funny, we talk about getting kids to use their own experiences to do things and yet in so many ways the system denigrates their experiences. We so rarely ask them to write about anything meaningful. The classic topics related to kids are nauseating things about what you did in your holiday, and people are still using those things. It seems to have been a classic joke that you get kids to write about their holidays, as if you are pretending that nobody does it anymore; but people do, and I find that very worrying. That's their concession perhaps to using the kids' experiences, but what sort of experience is that?*

The difficulty of taking students out for excursions was another area on which teachers commented. The principal is concerned for the safety of students during excursions, and concerned that any excursion undertaken should have clear educational merit in accordance with Education Department requirements. Teacher 2 said that she attempted to organize excursions less frequently here than in her previous schools. Teacher 1, as a new-comer, found the system more difficult to handle, and seldom used excursions. In interviews, some students also mentioned the restrictions imposed on excursions.

Teachers were also asked to describe the favourable influences on the teaching of English, and what factors gave them to go-ahead in developing their teaching programme. In his self-description, the Senior Master wrote:

> *The school benefits from drawing students from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and having administrators who believe in courtesy, consideration, punctuality, obedience to superiors and personal achievement. With good physical surroundings to help as well, students seem to be pleasant on the whole, if not hard working.*

Asked in his interview what gave him the go-ahead and allowed him to pursue the things that he wanted to do, the Senior Master said in relation to his administrative role:

> *Senior Master does that. I don't want to be an administrator 100% in the role of deputy, or a principal or a superintendent. So I've come to a level where I'm satisfying my ego in the sense of control, I suppose, as Senior Master, yet I'm still maintaining a contact with the children and the subject of English, which I feel is my vocation in the first place. And the fact that I'm*

> *dealing with values and trying to mould people into people, rather than teaching a subject of per se, gives me the go-ahead, because I believe the lasting things that they carry away from school are their values; they will hold them for the rest of their lives. English is one of the subjects which has an influence on students in this regard. So you might say a missionary zeal keeps me going.*

Teachers were asked directly to comment on the constraints on English teaching, and the gap between what they hoped to do, and what they could actually achieve. In the interview the Senior Master referred to the things that he thought valuable and went on to account for the gap in the following way:

> *The gap comes because attitudes are the hardest things to change and what I've been talking about often has been more or less attitudes to work, or to culture... Quite often just the fact that a child can't get on with a teacher becomes a handicap in the process of trying to develop from them, to bring out the best. I had this problem this year with one Year 11 boy, who is completely against the subject, mainly because of a personality difference, and it's very hard to know what to do there. Shifting him isn't going to be necessarily the solution either...*
>
> *We also have an expectation about the amount of work that students should do, and quite often this is not achieved. If a child only wants to write a page and stop any essay when he gets to the foot of a page, and says that's enough, you cannot make him write more. You may insist that he writes more, but this doesn't necessarily help develop his attitudes, or his abilities in English.*

One of the other difficulties for the Senior Master in achieving his objectives in English was related to insufficient contact with other English teachers within the school:

> *Quite often, English depends upon Senior Master and teacher talking about their work over cups of tea and at the moment, it is impossible for this to happen because we do not have the English staff-room or a completed English wing. We only have two rooms, plus a staff (room) converted to a group study room in the English wing, and all the other classes are scattered around the school.*

In his self-description, the Senior Master listed the following influences against achieving his aims in English teaching:

- *Less value placed on the protestant work ethic in the community.*
- *Less supervision by parents of student's homework.*
- *Unemployment and rapid change cause some students to lose aim for employment and reason for study.*
- *Welfare-state mentality - 'Give us what we need'. (Many students don't see English as an experience/doing subject; they want it to contain matter to be learned as in science, maths and social studies, etc.).*
- *Influence of TV and CB radio - students are spending most of their time with these.*
- *Increased mobility, so senior students spend time going out in their cars, socializing, etc.*
- *Desire for things new and novelty - no textbook satisfies the majority; things must be right up to date.*

- *Unwillingness to read deeper than surface content - losing any feeling for aesthetics or emotive response to language (perhaps influence of TV again).*
- *Students claiming study and exercise for other school subjects do not leave enough time for reading.*
- *Broken and one-parent homes causing problems.*
- *The drug scene - students under age (even in Year 10) are drinking, smoking more, and some are using hard drugs.*

Other teachers found that school rules and school policy on assessment and marking were more restricting for them than any other factors.

Teacher 2 said that the gap came about because of the circumstances created within the school.

> *Things like 40-minute periods - I'd like to have longer. Things like furniture - they seem like such stupid silly things but the furniture being there - furniture not being allowed to be moved, furniture having to be put back for things like drama - this certainly is annoying, and in the beginning they used to bug me a lot, those restrictions, and those handicaps. But as the years have gone by I really think you can arrange and organize what you want to do, no matter what the restrictions are or the complications, and so as the year is going on I think there is less and less gap. The only one bugbear is still concern with the Achievement Certificate, and the fact that so much of our time and energy in the classroom is beholden to that Achievement Certificate. The problems of comparability, the problems of testing, marking and all this, that is very frustrating, and that is a big gap between what I actually do and what I would like to do.*

The Senior Master pointed out that, as in most other Western Australian schools, it was impossible for English teachers to have their own classrooms and arrange them to suit themselves. All English classes, however, are timetabled for one double period per week to allow teachers to engage in more extended activities. This teacher also found that the assessment demands within the school actively prevented her from carrying out work that she would like to do with her students:

> *Sometimes they get in the way. At the end of last term, because the assessments have to begin early, and then because we had a couple of weeks at the end of term, we were able to do quite a lot of videoing. Because it is so time-consuming, you can't launch into any great programme of video work; you just have to stay with the expected lot. Because we are having troubles with comparability amongst all the lowest group classes, we now every three or four weeks do across-the-board testing, across-the-board comprehension for Year 9, across-the-board creative writing for Year 8, and so on.*

The teacher also wanted to build on her students' interests by offering them some choices in the work that they do, but found it very difficult in the context of the school.

> *I do negotiate. What I try and do is put through the compulsory unit as quickly and effectively as I can, and then hope to be left along the way with maybe three or four weeks of our own. Then they choose. We try the contract system. We just finished with the Voc. kids (Year 10 vocational group. See description under 'outcomes') and they did a thing of their own. Every now and then, on these spare weeks (we call it the odds-and-ends weeks) sometimes we will have questionnaires to see what they want to do and we will*

> *make it a total free thing sometimes. Sometimes we will get so wrapped in it and I'll say, 'Will we keep going with this?' and yes, they would like to. So in those free weeks I try to almost let them take the way.*

Three teachers commented on the adverse effect that they perceived the assessment system within the school to have on their students. Teacher 1 said:

> *The work I do with Year 8 and 9 should be affected more by the comparability tests, but I have almost been trying to ignore it. Again that worries me because I hate to think I am depriving my kids of something that they may need, even though I regard the test as useless in assessing anything worth while. It does affect the work I do with the kids in that it affects their reaction to the things they produce. They worry about the irrelevancies - not the irrelevancies, but the less important matters of spelling things - and are frightened to write, because of it. The absurd thing is that you get a kid to finally write something and enjoy it and then he goes on to his little comparability test and it's marked by someone else and he gets 2½ for it. Then you have to sit and try and convince him that it is worth while. I feel it's terribly disturbing, this BSE comparability test thing...*
>
> *I believe so strongly that kids must, at all times, be treated positively, and I don't understand how this categorization of kids in Basic, Intermediate, has advanced in the system. I have a boy in my Year 9 class who will be Basic for the rest of his school life, because he has always been that way and he can't see that it can be any different, or that he is in any way valuable or that he is in any way able to use English or language...*

This teacher finds that the adverse effect of the emphasis on assessment is not limited to the lower-school students, but also affects students in Years 11 and 12.

> *I find that, particularly in relation to senior kids, it has totally stultified them. They spend most of their time being frightened about what is going to happen in the TAE, and whether their marks are good.*

Teacher 4 also had reservations about the effect of continuous assessment on her students:

> *I gather that, in Australia, continual assessment is the norm, rather than end-of-term and end-of-year exams. Although I theoretically condone this, I find that students, particularly my 10th Year advanced group, are controlled and even inhibited by MARKS. An indirect effect is, unbelievably, the distortion of language. By creeping tentatively into a general discussion on assessment, I found that students tried to achieve high marks (obviously) and in doing so tried too hard. Consequently their use of language is often formal and distorted. For example:*
>
> *'I have never had a reason to arrive at a really fearful moment' instead of 'I have never been really afraid'.*
>
> *To try to relax the pressure somewhat, I gave my 10th Years a list of topics and allowed them to write on the chosen topic in a double period. I stressed that the work would not be marked by me, but would be read by someone within that same group. The*

> *writer was also not to write his/her name on the paper. The papers were shuffled, read, commented on and corrected by the others and then given to me with the name of the marker only on the paper.*
>
> *These papers were of a higher standard than usual and the language, in particular, was more simple, direct and effective.*

The Senior Master described the assessment requirements and marking policy in the following way:

> *I do require regular assessments, because for the Achievement Certificate, or our 50% towards the Certificate of Secondary Education, we are to judge the child over all the aims and objectives of the English course. To do this fairly we must have some uniformity. So, in lower school I require, each term, ten marks from teachers. Of those, five are based on written expression (four essay form, plus a letter), two comprehension, one for drama, and then two more difficult ones of contribution and discussion, in attitudes and books. In upper school the same system applies in that there are a number of marks for written expression, comprehension, written tests and also for the amount of reading the teacher observes them doing, and role in discussion, the use of language, and attitudes again.*
>
> *A policy for marking - we haven't got one, other than that chart which sets out comparability in marks and grading of all different types to fit in with the Achievement Certificate level. (The chart referred to indicates a range of 0-3½ for Basic-level work, 4-6½ at Intermediate level, and 7-10 for Advanced level.) So, if anyone awards an 'A', this is a distinction which is like an advance credit. So there is a chart, but we leave it to the individual teacher to mark the work as best he feels he could do to help the students along in their work. All I insist on is in marks-books that the marks be according to the BSE comparability-type range for all students, so that we can make assessments at the end of every term. His Basics might have six, sevens and eights put on their work, but I would expect any bit of Basic work in a teacher's mark-book to be marked as 3½ or below, but the students don't see those marks. That is the only policy I make and I'm afraid teachers don't keep to it.*

Teacher 2 was one of the teachers who found the system described above unacceptable:

> *I think you should not just believe in what you should be teaching, but believe in what credit you should be giving the kids for what they are doing, and you just see if you can, when our system of marking says that any students who are Basic level may be scoring from 0-3½. It means throughout the year, if you are marking with comparability, and if that child is working their little heart out but never going to achieve any great standard, that all through that child's book will be these 3-3½s, 3½s, 2s - you know these sorts of markings, and the marking is killing for the kids... So what I did in the end was to have them all getting these 6s and 7s in their books. I did that last year. I had a fight with the moderator about that. Now how do you say to him 'I put 7 on their books so as not to kill them, and in my book I've got what it is in the comparability system of things?' Then some of the kids who were so uptight about getting good levels were realizing they were getting 6 from me and they had had it explained to them in all the other departments where a 6 was - a 6 was an Intermediate pass. They got their Intermediate pass.*

Teachers were asked how conscious they were of the BSE levels of the students as they worked with them. The Senior Master said:

> *I tell teachers it is policy no child is ever to be called an Advanced, Intermediate or Basic student; it's not them that's Advanced, Intermediate, whatever, but the quality of an individual bit of work. Every bit of work is to be looked at individually, recorded individually and the overall assessment of that child is left to the end of the year, or at the end of every term, when we have to send a report to their parents. Then we look at results and label them. But the child is an individual, I hope, in all English classes until we have to come and make an assessment.*

In her interview, Teacher 2 pointed out how difficult it was for her and for her students to ignore the BSE levels of the students:

Teacher 2:	*I try not to be conscious of it because I hate the classifying - the importance it all assumes - but I try not to be conscious of it.*
Interviewer:	*So when you are assessing the student's performance you try to put aside your prior knowledge of what level that student has achieved?*
Teacher 2:	*Yes, and I don't ever record that level in my marks book so that I can't keep thinking, 'Oh, what will I give him? I will give him a 3 because he is Basic.' To me that is terrible and so I try not to let that intrude upon any of the work we do.*
Interviewer:	*How conscious of their levels are the students?*
Teacher 2:	*Very, especially the Year 10 students. The Voc. students are so very aware of the levels because they are not going to get apprenticeships unless they have certain levels. The problem is that they are totally unrealistic; some of them think that if they have been good and that if they try hard and if they please me and I say they are good, that means they are going to get an improvement level next year and you can't answer that. The only thing I am doing now with them is not to give them marks on the book for too much of their work.*
Interviewer:	*But if I came into any of your classes and asked them what level they are all in now...?*
Teacher 2:	*I think the Year 10 students would... I am pretty sure they could tell you what level they are in English. Some of them mightn't tell you the truth, but I am sure they know.*

Teachers were also asked for their views about the BSE comparability test. Teacher 1 said that as a teacher she found it stultifying, and that she thought it gave students a fixed view of their abilities before they had a chance to develop. The Senior Master found the comparability test quite useful in some ways:

> *The Series 3 test is, in a sense, a good guide to see how the school is performing in relation to the rest of the State. But*

> *that doesn't mean that results in Series 3 necessarily govern results in Year 10, because teachers may find a stimulation from that to improve work. For example, this year's Series 3 printout says that essays are only 22% Advanced, but in reading and multiple choice there are 33% Advanced. The discrepancy comes in the fact that we're not motivating students to write creatively, so maybe over the next year we will overcome that problem and by the end of Year 10 the figure for Advanced students should be what it normally is in this school - about a third, rather than 22%.*

This reflection is enlarged upon in a comment by the Senior Master on the bottom of the Series 3 results:

> *This confirms a worrying trend seen in written work generally throughout the school. While reading and multiple-choice comprehension are good, and the students are generally fluent speakers, they are not producing written work with the creativity, imagination, expression and care of which they should be capable. Somewhere we are missing out on motivation and stimulation - it's just not caused by inexperienced new teachers. Perhaps we should ask for 'interesting','imaginative or creative' and 'full sentences' every period of written expression. Train in planning and proofreading. Encourage more reading.*

Teacher 2 found the way in which the school used the comparability tests undesirable.

Teacher 2:	*Oh, well, it's statistics, and I guess if you are someone who thinks statistics are terribly important and valuable, readable and not manipulatable, well fine. It's when it takes over and becomes the bugbear of the teaching programme and assessment programme - those sort of tests are really so unimportant, and there is this huge margin for error. And the fact is that they are being taken as the be-all and end-all.*
Interviewer:	*They are in this school? Comparably the test results are very important?*
Teacher 2:	*Well, they are here - the whole organization of assessments are busily matched up with the comparability, so that the match is good, and the figures all gell, and when they're sent (to the BSE) they're going to be lovely and get lots of ticks and things like that.*

Teacher 2 accounted for the emphasis on the comparability tests and assessment in the following way:

> *The sad thing about this school is that it was oriented and organized as a pilot school for the Achievement Certificate, so that facts and figures and statistics assumed incredible importance. The people who have stayed here—especially those in the maths and science departments—loving those statistics, have made the system more and more complicated and that's the way it's stayed.*

Teachers interviewed were asked what they valued most in English teaching. Teacher 1 said that English teaching was a shared activity, and that she could not give up the pleasure of teaching and being part of people growing and developing in a way that was personally enriching for her as well as the students.

The Senior Master said again with emphasis on his administrative role in the subject:

> *I think in the present school situation, written work is the thing which must be valued most, because it is a thing that people judge English on, not only the exam, but BSE moderators. And this is causing great concern at the moment, that the English work is not up to the standard that we think can be achieved. So I would say written work depends upon lots of reading, discussion - and they're the most important things that lead up to it. The thing that one must value in the final analysis is what is seen. By what is seen, I mean what can be seen by a stranger - someone coming into the situation long after. A class teacher sees all aspects of English work as it is going, whether it is discussion, reading, thinking and so on, but written work is something to be seen by all people universally, and judged by all people by certain universal standards, if such standards exist.*

WHAT PERSPECTIVES DO STUDENTS HAVE?

Small groups of students were interviewed in order to get their perspective on English teaching and learning. One group of Year 10 students defined English in the following way:

Student 1: *You're supposed to get an idea... It's supposed to teach you how to understand what you are reading, how to pick out main ideas of things you are reading... You're supposed just to learn how to spell things, how to punctuate, so you can write something down and understand your reading as well.*

Interviewer: *So comprehension is a big part of it?*

Student: (unidentified) *Yes.*

Student 2: *And also, so you can put down your own ideas and a sensible way, so that other people can understand what you are going on about.*

Interviewer: *Right... communication, so to speak - that kind of thing?*

Student 3: *To get better at what you already know about the language...*

A Year 12 group felt that the main purpose of their English course was to pass the exam, but that there ought to be broader objectives as well.

Student 1: *I think mostly what it is aimed at doing and how the lessons fit together and that is to make you think about topics round you and therefore by getting you thinking, your written expression is a lot better because you have actually explored the topic that you are writing about.*

Interviewer: *Do you think that was some of what you were doing in that class I was in?*

Student 1: *Yes, well, more or less tearing the topic apart and explaining why he was saying things and everything else - to get your minds thinking into his, not exactly into his thought.. (Interviewer: That's Toffler, isn't it?).. but to see why he has put points in and to see how you can develop them and use them for your own references when you are writing essays on material that is similar.*

Student 2: *Yes, but everything you are doing at class and in English class is only preparing you for the exams at the end of the year. If you were out working and weren't at school, you wouldn't have read that book.*

Student 1: *But then again you might've. I mean, I know I wouldn't have picked it up and read it if I wasn't at school, but that isn't the point. The point is that they are picking books of interest for you to read that may be of help in your exams.*

Student 2: *Yes, but in whose opinion are they of interest?*

Student 1: *Well, I don't think they are interesting but they try broadly to pick out most people's lives. What do you think, Tony?*

Student 3: *What do I think about? Well, I think the main objectives involved in any sort of programme in high school is in 4th and 5th Year, to get you through the exam, but I don't think that's the important thing because you find that a lot of people do fail the exam but they still have picked up a lot of hints, points and things that are going to help them later in life, which I think is the main idea. I don't really think the point about passing is all that much important. I think the point about learning something and being educated is a more sort of ... important.*

Student 1: *And also, books like especially 'Future Shock', because it makes you think about your surroundings now, that affects your thinking because it makes you - I mean, you go day to day now, but when you read the book and you stop and think, everything is going faster. It makes you...*

The students went on to develop their ideas on the relationship between learning experiences and English at some length.

Interviewer: *Well, do you think any learning was going in yesterday's lesson?*

Student 2: *No, not really. A lot of discussion, I would have thought, but I don't ... think you would have learnt something.*

Student 3: *I think there must be a definition for learning. I don't think it's like - Learning is just being somewhere. I mean you learn things every day.*

Student 2: *I think learning is to kind of - um - define ... really is being aware of your society and taking in new things.*

Student 3: *Learning doesn't really involve things. 'I learnt this today'. Learning is more ... is an experience; that's why older people, older men - like you've heard of the wise old man, obviously - because he has just experienced things. It doesn't mean that he is smart or that he was a scholar; it just meant that he has experienced life and knows the tricks that go on in life and things like that.*

Student 1: *No, but he didn't learn though through someone telling him.*

Student 3: *Learning is an experience; it's not something you go to school ... I mean, you might not even to to school and you might still learn - through experience.*

Student 2: *Yes, but if someone describes to you the way to walk to school, you don't learn anything until you actually walk to school. You remember it a lot more if you do it.*

Student 1: *That's what we were learning yesterday because we were taking bits out of the book. We were discussing them and getting everybody's viewpoints; therefore that's why it wasn't... if you have just read it... it was experiencing what he meant. Do you know what I mean, Tony?*

Student 3: *Yes, I do.*

Student 1: *Then you express it for me.*

Student 3: *No, I don't think we should dwell on it. I think the main point is to know - we go to school and we go to English, but English isn't a learning subject like mathematics. You can't learn a formula. English is sort of like, sort of funny; it's sort of like life because it's as we are being told it's you, and if you can express yourself well, then it's in fact you, so I don't think you can learn formulas in English - Well, you can't; but I mean you're sort of learning things about life that make other things tick.*

Student 2: *Learning of the basics, like when you learn to walk - that's what you more or less learn, 'cause English comes into all your subjects really and what you can't learn in English you find hard to learn in other subjects. So English is more or less the basic foundation.*

A second group of Year 12 students tackled the relationship between language development, the exam, and some of their school texts.

Interviewer: *How do you think you learn to construct sentences or utter them?*

Student 1: *Hearing from other people.*

Interviewer: *What do you think?*

Student 3: *I think practice, as far as writing goes. Practice is the main thing - trial and error sort of thing.*

Just for all your experiences, from what you read, all the books you read, films... all the people around you, story points and how you talk.

Interviewer: *If you think that you learn to use the language to write and to talk by practice, what good do you think are the enormous number of exercises and things that I saw you doing in your lessons? You know, 'Mark the choice' - and isn't there a separate book called 'Mastering English', which has lots of different sort of exercises in it? Do you think that has helped you at all.*

Student 3: *Not with the English course we've done now. If we get into an exam, they ask all those questions. It hasn't got much to do with what we've done in 'Using Better English' at all, because it's a different sort of course. In the exams they ask us to write an essay or to write about a poem and then you get the multi-choice. These aren't anything to do with the sort of stuff you learn in 'Using Better English'.*

Student 2: *It's good practice to have multiple-choice questions and it helps us to be able to read things much faster and get the questions out.*

The Year 10 group were convinced of the need to know why they were doing certain things in English.

Interviewer: *Do you always know why you do the things that you do in English?*

Student 2: *No, not until maybe a fair time after, when people start... You see, some of them might be just bits of things... You've got to have them all together before you know what you are doing.*

Student 1: *You do bits and pieces and finally two or three weeks later it dawns on you what you are really going on about... and you think... ah!*

Interviewer: *Would it help if it happened the other way - if you spent more time working out why you are doing these things so that you had a clear understanding of why you did all the bits?*

Student 1: *Yeh, before you went and did them. It would help a lot.*

Student 3: *Yeh.*

Student 2: *You might enjoy it more then, because if you know what you are doing, you know what it is for.*

Interviewer: *Why - Well, what needs to happen then? Do you need -? Is it the case of the teacher telling you more, or do you need to ask the teacher more? Would* *you ever ask the teacher why are you doing this?*

Student 3: *I think the teacher should tell you before a lesson starts why we are doing it.*

Student 1: *A lot - a lot of students are not so much scared of the teacher, but they don't want to ask because they don't want to draw attention to themselves. So you just sit there like a stuffed dummy and don't say a thing. You don't know what you are learning or what...*

This brought the Year 10 students to consider the influence that an individual teacher could have on them, and their relationships with different teachers of their current experience.

Student 1: *It depends a lot on the teacher ... if it wasn't ——————— (name of teacher) we probably wouldn't learn half as much as we do ... She helps us a lot and, you know, she doesn't force us to do things. She gives it to do by choice and half the time you choose to do it anyway, just because it's her.*

Student 2: *Yeh, you have to get on well with teachers, because if you don't like a teacher you just block out what they're saying anyway. You don't want to do what they're telling you.*

Interviewer: *But does that - Could that also mean that, if you do like a teacher, you'll quite happily do things that you really don't believe are valuable or you don't really want to do, but you do them because you like that teacher?*

Student 3: *Yeh, that's right.*

The same students reflected upon a less happy experience in Year 8 English.

Student 3: *Yeh, the teachers in - English teachers have to be kind of like you. Like (name of teacher) - she's one of us, kind of. Not (name of second teacher) - he was far from it.*

Student 2: *He was really. It's like he was something from another world, kind of. He was really - he treated us like we were little First Years and that was it.*

Student 3: *He just told us what to do and that was it.*

Student 2: *He never used to worry about us. (Name of teacher), when she ... when we got her in Second Year ... Oh, ... I was right down to Intermediate pass with (name of second teacher), but with (name of teacher) I went straight up to Advanced credit because she understands us and tries to - She gives us things which interest us and our age group.*

One of the Year 12 groups, when asked if there was anything that they valued or enjoyed in their school English course, also arrived at a consideration of the effect of the individual teacher on their learning.

Interviewer: *What are the things you have done in your school life in English which you valued or enjoyed?*

Student 2: *There's nothing I can really think about. Actually I think English isn't really what I expected it to be. It's not really interesting each lesson; it's more or less related to studying at getting better at English and I find that if I can't really understand something in one area of English, I can't really seek help because maybe some of the teachers don't really want to help you. They expect you to know things in that area of English and so it's really hard for some people when you are not really good at English and you want to learn and get better at it and can't really have that opportunity to learn because maybe the teacher doesn't want to help you or doesn't appear to try to help.*

Interviewer: *What is it that's difficult? What have you got in mind?*

Student 3: *There is one teacher who says you should be able to read your comprehension right now - you should be able to write your essay and not make any mistakes. But since the year... at high school we haven't been taught how to write essays or to write letters or anything. All we do is have discussions or write an essay now, and if you couldn't do it, it was bad luck for you. They didn't teach you how to do it.*

Student 2: *And if you follow on that and went to see the teacher after the lesson to seek help, and, you know - and if the teacher doesn't help you, he expects you to know it, and so it leaves you out.*

Interviewer: *English is something that...*

Student 1: *It's so natural and creative and to get help from the teachers... I don't think they can do a lot. It's so much an individual effort.*

The Year 10 students found a variety of aspects of English enjoyable:

Student 3: *Plays...*

Interviewer: *Plays ... the drama part of it?*

Student 2: *I hate drama.*

Student 1: *Yeh, I don't like drama - it's embarrassing. You have to do stupid things in front of everybody that you don't really want to do...*

Student 2: *Yeh, sometimes you know that - you know that you're funny, but kids only like people who are funny when they are acting, and some people just can't, just can't carry it off, you know, trying to be funny. (Yeh)*

Student 3: *I like doing plays that are funny when we all get together and make up plays. Doesn't really, hey - it doesn't teach us anything. It's just fun.*

Student 1: *I like the reading part, but that's only because I love reading. A lot of the other people don't like it and I love anything to do with reading - and comprehension I really like, because I'm good at it... And creative writing I like; it's my favourite.*

Interviewer: *Is that because you are good at that too, or are you?*

Student 1: *Yeh, because I want to be an author ... I love creative writing - anything to do with writing. Whether it's creative or not I just like writing things down, in poetry, and stuff like that...*

Interviewer: *And ... you're not so keen on the writing part, but you think it is important for you, Gavin?*

Student 3: *Yeh.*

The Year 10 students were able to distinguish the aspects of English they thought most useful from those that they found enjoyable.

Student 1: *Punctuation, comprehension and spelling - just the basics of reading and writing.*

Student 3: *To - to be able to understand what you're reading, to express yourselves - and what Heather said, all that...*

Student 2: *Yeh, just how to - how to write and how to read ... is kind of basically what it is.*

Student 3: *And know why you are doing it.*

For these students, the criterion of usefulness did not extend to analysis and study of language.

Student 3: *In (an earlier year), what they concentrated on was vowels and verbs and all that sort of junk ... (yeh). Now we are doing kind of understand things - go real deep into written expression (muffled) ...*

Student 2: *Then it was just writing skills, just how you - you could put the vowels in the right place, and the adverbs before the verbs, and all that stuff like that. But now, it is more understanding ...*

Student 1: *More how to put things on paper correctly, but now it is more understanding what to put down and why you put it down.*

Interviewer: *And that's an improvement, do you think?*

Student 2: *Yeh, it's more interesting.*

But - but ... some kids don't take it seriously in the first couple of years... like, I didn't because I didn't like the teacher much. I didn't listen to what he used to say, and now I don't know much about *verbs and adjectives and all this.*

Interviewer: *Do you think it matters?*

Student 2: *Yeh, sometimes...*

Interviewer: *I mean, if you knew more about verbs and adjectives, would that help you...?*

Student: *How to use them.*

Interviewer: *It would help you how to use them, would it?*

Student 1: *Yeh, you'd know how to use them and why you use them, and it just ... When you write things down, they say pick out the adjectives and the verbs, and that... I don't know what the hell they are going on about. I know when I write them down. Yeh, but that's the only time - but I don't know why it's there...*

Student 2: *That's the only (muffled) time when I find it difficult. I don't find it difficult if I'm reading something.*

Interviewer: *So... it's not so much using the language that's the problem; it's talking about the language that is the hard part, is it?*

Student 2: *Yeh.*

Student 1: *I don't know why you have to know about verbs, and that, to ... oh.*

Student 3: *Yeh. I agree.*

Interviewer: *You agree that you do need to know about them or that you don't need to know about them?*

Student 3: *Don't need to know about them.*

Student 1: *When you write things down, you don't worry if you're putting the verbs in the right place and stuff like that. You write down what you feel and think. I reckon that it's no use for something else to say, 'Oh, you did it wrong.' How do they know what you did wrong when it's what you think? The way they make it...*

One of the groups of Year 12 students defined 'improvements' in terms of developments in their own abilities. For example:

Student 1: *Sure, like now in English I don't think much of getting up and talking in front of the class, but two years ago I would have done anything to get out of doing that. Being away or anything like that.*

Interviewer: *What do you think has caused the change?*

Student 1: *I don't know ... Well, I have been made to do it. I had to do it ... getting used to the idea, then doing it, gradually getting used to talking in front* *of people. All your friends make fun of you and you are all right.*

Interviewer: *Well, what a tremendous thing to happen.*

Student 2: *Two years ago I wasn't all that confident of talking in front of students, but it didn't really affect me all that much. I think what has happened to me is my creative writing ... This interaction between students, like we did yesterday. This has more or less set my imagination running and I can pick up a subject and look at it and therefore my writing is much more fluent, and got a lot more ideas into it, whereas two years ago it would have just been basic thought, just whatever first came into my head, which wasn't normally that much ... And just put it down it wasn't ... it was just something I HAD to do, but now it's something more that I like to do because I can put myself into the writing.*

Student 3: *I'd say my writing ability has opened up in the fact that - well, I think more openly about things and issues that I like. Maybe two or three years ago I wasn't that open and I was sort of biased ... you know. I thought if I'd take over the topic I would think my opinion, which is right; but now I get on the defence and weigh up the two different opinions and see which I feel the most about. I was more biased.*

Student 1: *You would write more or less what everybody else expected you to write, not what you really thought. Is that what you mean?*

Student 3: *No, well see - if we are given a topic and I would think - I had my reader, and whatever thoughts I had I would write about it. Now I think more carefully about it, and 'Do I really mean that? Is it something else I am really thinking about?' and sort of weigh out the differences and that improves the essay so much, because you are thinking about it and getting more ideas and you can sort of just go into it a lot more.*

Student 2: *You are just not really taking the top; you are really delving into it.*

The Year 10 group also found the broadening of their individual ideas through discussion to be valuable.

Student 2: *When you hear other people's ideas it helps you understand more about what you're thinking. Sometimes you think them, but you're really confused, because you don't know why you're thinking like this.*

Someone else, like your next-door neighbour that you're sitting next to might have a completely different idea. It makes you feel real weird. If you find someone else with the same idea, you think, well, maybe it wasn't that strange after all.

The Year 10 students were a little less sure about improvements in their own abilities to read or write:

Student 1: *Written expression's improved; I think mine has.*

Student 2: *Yeh, mine has too.*

Interviewer: *Why?*

Student 2: *They teach us how to structure our sentences properly. I used to not make up proper sentences... I used to start with 'because' and not have a proper sentence at all. I used to mumble on like ... When I re-read them - some of my primary school things - I couldn't understand what I was going on about.*

Student 1: *Also, now you are more - I think it's freer now ... to write down what you think. In First Year, you're kind of too self-conscious of what you are writing down because you knew that someone else would probably read it; but now you don't worry about what the other people in the class say.*

Student 3: *I don't think I have improved. All I do is try and put bigger words in, so it's sort of - You don't improve your writing... I still kind of write, you know, like I did in primary school.*

Student 1: *Well, my vocabulary has (muffled)....*

Interviewer: *What about your ability to read? Do you read better now than you did a couple of years ago?*

Student 3: *Yeh, I'd understand it better.*

Student 2: *I read better now and that's because I read all the time.*

Interviewer: *So, practising is what helps?*

Student 2: *Yeh. And it increases your vocabulary a lot too, because when you're in First Year, no matter how many big words you read, you don't really understand them then.*

Student 1: *And teachers say - ummm ... if you see a word you can't understand, look it up in the dictionary, but you never do. You just, like, if you're really wrapped into a book, you find this hard ... well, you just skip over it. You don't want to stop and look for it.*

Interviewer: *You guess what it means...*

Student: (unidentified) *Yeh, good guessing ... most of the time you are right anyway.*

The Year 10 group were quite clear about what they disliked in English.

Student 1: *Tests.*

Interviewer: *Is there any value in tests?*

Student 1: *Not really, because I don't reckon - How well you do in a test depends so much on the day. You could have a headache, or you could just - like, I get real tense in tests and get real worried, and then make stupid mistakes; but when you are just going in your class, I think it should be taken more on class and discussion and stuff like that.*

Interviewer: *Do you do too many tests in English, do you think?*

Student 2: *I - I don't think so; tests don't worry me that much, because, as Heather says, it's just as you are that day, and I only hate tests if you have to study them and you know you haven't and then it's all your fault then. (Mm...)*

Student 1: *Comprehension tests aren't so bad; it's just mainly just the thing of answering questions.*

Student 2: *Yeh, and what you've learnt over all the English periods.*

Student 3: *With my English tests, I always think I'm doing well... well, sometimes ... you know, to do with it ... but when I get the tests back I get a really bad mark for it.*

The two different effects of writing in tests, and writing for a known teacher were summed up by:

Student 1: *Oh ... in a way, it's different ... if ... for a test and (name of teacher). I kind of do two different types of work really, because I know (name of teacher) - I'm kind of on the same wavelength as her English-wise, you know, with comprehension and stuff like that, and writing ... I know how to get my ideas down in a way that she'd like, and the things ... If I write something which I don't like, half the time (name of teacher) doesn't like it either, so we're kind of on the same track.*

Students were asked how they thought that their parents saw English and whether they discussed the English work with their parents at all. The response from the Year 10 students was typical:

Student 1: *My parents, they don't understand what I'm doing in English half the time ... you know, when I take home my creative writing and that, Mum's always really pleased, because she understands it and she really likes it; but with things like adverbs and verbs, you see, they never hardly done them, and when they did it wasn't all that important, and she doesn't see why we have to, you know - keep on going on and on, like in First Year like we did. She used to get really upset on that...*

Student 2: *I - I never talk to my parents much about English; they never say anything to me about it. I just go on with my writing at school and they just ... they don't worry about...*

Student 3: *Yeh, I'm the same way. I just tell them sometimes what I did for a test. And they say, 'Oh that's really good', you know.*

Student 1: *Yeh, they say oh, very good, or ah ...*

PARENTS

In his interview, the Principal commented on contact between the school and parents.

> *As I said in the early days they were very staunch in fund-raising. These days they take a great interest in the school. We have a number of parents' nights during the year. This year and part of last year we had nights devoted principally to letting parents interview teachers. The last couple of these we had 80 parents one night and 150 on the last occasion to interview teachers about their students. So that sort of support is a pattern. We have always enjoyed that sort of support. The annual parents' night— we have had very large crowds here in the past to see the work of the school. Apart from that, they maintain the canteen (that's a very well-equipped set-up), they maintain the library funds, and that has been a main commitment since the school was opened. The P. & C. Committee is a focal point for any liaison which takes place between parents and school.*

Again, in our short time in the school, we were unable to make any comprehensive survey of parental opinion.

An interview with two parents who worked in the canteen revealed that they knew very little of the English that their children did at school. One of the parents was reasonably clear about English in Year 11 and 12, because she had studied it at night school. However, as revealed by comments from the Principal and the librarian (see *Special Features*) the Parents and Citizens' Association does support school initiatives financially.

OUTCOMES

In four days it is difficult to get a detailed sense of outcomes. For example, much of the oral work, such as debating and public-speaking competitions and school dramatic productions are not visible to observers who are only in a school for a short time. Bearing in mind the limitations of this approach, we focused on Year 12 files as a source of information about what generally happens in English, and what kinds of writing the students do in Year 12.

Upper-school files for English and literature were characterized by answers to practice examination questions, on a predetermined formula. For example, in an assignment on Kenneth Slessor's poem 'William Street', a girl had written in Year 11:

> *Wording is simple, with no long or unusual words. In the fourth stanza, slang is used, this adds to the general effect. The poem, although short, is concise and gets across its message, although it is at times hard to grasp the poet's idea behind the writing of this poem.*

It is questionable whether this writing is the student speaking in her own voice, or merely responding meaninglessly (and in fact, contradictorily) to an imposed and equally meaningless (to the student) formula for writing examination answers to poetry questions. All of the writing in this student's file was directed towards exams, with no reflective or exploratory writing for the student herself, or for a trusted audience. The contents of the file could be classified in the following way:

- 17 pages of informal notes and scribbles (writing in student's own hand, mainly taken during class).
- 12 pages of formal notes on literature, exam techniques, etc. (copied or dictated).
- 11 pages of essay writing (assignments) - all answers to typical exam questions.
- Term exam papers and answers.

A similar pattern of copied or dictated notes, practice examination answers, and duplicated notes was found throughout the upper-school files in both English and literature.

The teacher's comments on the practice exam writing tended to focus on surface features, rather than the content or ideas presented by the student. The exceptions to this pattern were students who had a command of examination English and therefore the teacher was able (or considered himself free) to focus more on content. Students who were less able to meet the examination answer bill tended to accumulate negative comments focusing on their surface errors. For example, one Year 12 student's writing alternated between his own fairly expressive language and a learned 'acceptable' language of literary criticism. Comments throughout his file concentrated on his failure to meet the teacher's standards of examination writing, and largely ignored the originality of the ideas.

The emphasis on 'practice for the exam' in this school was motivated by the idea that students will therefore perform better in the exam. In years prior to 1976 the average results for this school remained very close to the State average. When students were awarded a level (from 1976) rather than a percentage mark, it became apparent that students from this school tended to cluster in the middle. That is, fewer students (than might be expected) gained level 1 and fewer students were in the lowest levels. (See table below.)

	ENGLISH						LITERATURE					
RANK	1976 n = 74			1977 n = 80			1976 n = 13			1977 n = 12		
	n	%	State %	n	%	State %	n	%	State %	n	%	State %
1	2	2	10	3	3	9	0	0	10	0	0	10
2	7	9	9	10	12	10	1	7	10	1	8	11
3	3	4	9	6	7	8	2	15	9	1	8	7
4	8	10	8	10	12	9	1	7	10	1	8	9
5	15	20	11	10	12	10	2	15	6	2	16	9
6	4	5	8	6	7	6	3	23	9	3	25	9
7	12	16	7	9	11	9	2	15	10	0	0	9
8	8	10	9	11	13	7	0	0	6	2	16	7
9	4	5	7	7	8	7	2	15	9	1	8	8
10	6	8	8	6	7	8	0	0	8	0	0	7
N/A	5	6	9	2	2	12	0	0	8	1	8	8

When this tendency was discussed with the Senior Master, he pointed out that the socio-economic status of the student intake had dropped considerably, and that many of the more affluent parents sent their children to independent schools. Therefore, he felt it was not surprising that this trend had occurred, and that it was remarkable that there were comparatively few students in lower levels.

We also focused on Year 10 files, for this is the year in which students decide either to leave school or continue into upper school. This school has a tradition of catering for the differing needs of students who leave school at the end of Year 10, and those who continue into upper school. The Principal referred to the work-experience programme:

> *One of the other links with the community is in the work-experience programme. We have had such a programme for many years now. It began here really as a sort of grooming and deportment extension for boys to groom them and prepare them for applying for a job in an area where you could get one anyway, maybe not quite the one you would like. From that it's got to the point now where it is looked on as a fairly vital exercise for the youngster to be prepared to apply for the job and to have some experience of what is involved in becoming an employee. There's a lot of work goes into canvassing the district for employers prepared to accept our youngsters. A very fruitful exercise is resulting from this, we feel ...*
>
> *They have a week in the job and they get a report from the employer - a structured report. The lady who looks after them visits the the employers, if necessary. We have some disappointments, of course, but by and large it is a fruitful programme, which does provide some very worthwhile links with the community, because I know that they never cease to be astonished at what the youngster is like. We've been astonished in our turn with what we think are rather unlikely candidates who sometimes get glowing reports back from the employer. Some of them were offered jobs on the spot.*

The Year 10 classes had been divided into tertiary-oriented classes and vocationally oriented classes for Term 3.

The division of the Year 10 classes into TOC and VOC groups was done at the request of the English staff, and with the intention of focusing more on transactional and functional work and writing. Consequently, the Year 10 files showed a marked change from the kind of work done in Terms 1 and 2 to the kind of work done in Term 3. The work in Terms 1 and 2 was done in themes (e.g. humour, advertising, outsiders) and led to quite a lot of opinionative personal and reflective writing. Writing in Term 3 places greater emphasis on exercises, of the 'working with words', comprehension passages and grammar-drill kind. This change was based on the stated assumption that work of this kind would improve students' writing abilities and reading skills, which were found to be poor on 'across-the-board tests'.

Nearly all of the work in the files, including personal journals, was given a mark out of ten. Overall, through the Year 10 files, there was a movement from ideas, the student, continuous writing and a sense of exploration, to exercises, learning about language, and a programme aimed at improving abilities to use language by being taught about it. In general terms, there was little evidence of choice in the students' written work. That is, the pieces of work done, whether exercises, creative writing, opinionative prose and so on, are the same for the whole class, both in title or topic, and in form and approach.

SPECIAL FEATURES

One of the special features of this school was the remedial reading programme. The teacher, having had no specialist reading training in her pre-service teacher education programme, had taken five reading units in a conversion course at one CAE and had also attended a learning assistance teacher course at another CAE.

Although officially identified with the English department, the teacher tried to work across subject boundaries with the aims of increasing the awareness of other teachers, and helping the students to become independent readers in all areas.

> *Officially I belong to the English department and withdraw students from English lessons in the main, but I try to help students to develop reading strategies which will enable them to cope with reading tasks in all core subject areas, particularly in social studies and science. Assignment work in these subjects puts a big strain on students with reading (and invariably writing) deficits. As well as helping students with research-type reading skills, I also try to make teachers aware of the plight of these students - suggesting they bear this factor in mind when designing assignments and tests - and have, hopefully, made them more aware of the difficulty of the reading tasks they often set by assessing the readability of the student's textbooks and some reference books. For example, the text used in Year 8, Term 1, for social studies has a readability level of Year 11/12.*
>
> *My main aim, therefore, is to help students to become independent readers - to be able to cope independently with the reading requirements of high school. (In Year 10, with students who will be leaving school, the focus changes to reading requirements of everyday life.)*

The teacher identified the psycholinguistic approach to reading and language development as the greatest influence on her work.

> *The psycholinguistic model of the reading process and language development has been the greatest influence on my approach to reading and English in general. This has provided a logical rationale which explains many of my past experiences and observations in teaching English and gives a valuable framework to use in designing my programmes, and to evaluate new ideas, materials, etc.*
>
> *Although my whole approach to reading is based on the psycholinguistic philosophy, I believe there is a need for an eclectic approach to reading when dealing with students who have problems in this area. People learn through a variety of channels, so I attempt to use as many of these as possible - auditory, visual, movement - and try as many approaches as necessary, until I find something that works with a particular student.*
>
> *This influence was evident in the lessons observed. In one directed silent reading session students were reading a story called 'Roadeo', about trucks. In the first stages, students were asked to find all the extraneous clues (e.g. pictures) and predict what the main idea of the story might be from these and the title. Students were then asked to read three paragraphs to find out if there were any differences between a 'roadeo' and a horse rodeo. After discussion, students were asked to read to discover details of tasks that the drivers had to perform, and to analyse the diagram of the course to see what skills were being tested.*

In her self-description, the teacher identified the strategies which she has found most successful with her students.

> *USSR (sustained silent reading) has been a very effective way of getting students - even reluctant teachers - to read. This has been used by most of the English teachers as well as myself, with very pleasing (and often surprising) results. It is important for students to be able to borrow high-interest books. (I have accumulated a reasonable library of such books, and the main library also has a number.) One problem which bothers me is how to ensure that USSR remains in the English programme for the whole year. Ideally this should not be part of the English programme, but part of the total school programme.*
>
> *Oral discussion. As already mentioned, this helps students to formulate and grasp ideas. Most student answers to questions are done orally also, partly because these students find writing uncomfortable and a chore, but also because we are able to cover more ground. Students can be called on to substantiate their answers (e.g. by reading out the part of the story which supports their case) and this builds the attitude that there is not necessarily only one correct answer to a question. The small groups (6-8 students) with which I work are ideal for this oral interaction, and even shy children, who would not normally participate in class discussions, are able to take part. Working in pairs to answer written questions is also very valuable - generating discussion, substantiating statements, etc.*
>
> *Five-minute writing. Set as a daily task for students who have difficulty in getting thoughts down onto paper, it has proved very effective, particularly if their progress (total number of words written/5 mins) is graphed. Sometimes it is necessary to start with oral input (on tape), which is then transferred onto paper.*
>
> *Directed silent reading, where children are given an open question to direct their focus and purpose for reading. This also generates a great deal of discussion and students are required to substantiate their statements, usually by quoting from the text.*
>
> *Supported reading. A taped reading of the text of a book, which the child listens to while reading. Usually a few chapters read in this way are enough to stimulate a really reluctant reader to go on and finish the book.*
>
> *Thinking activities. Edward de Bono: Cognitive Research Trust Thinking Programme (Cambridge)-Cort Thinking. Students who have reading problems frequently do not think very readily, are passive, and have to be stirred into any cognitive activity. Cort-thinking discussions also provide children with plenty of thoughts - ideas for written expression.*

This teacher also found that SRA was of little value to her students. (All Year 8 students spend up to half of their time on SRA in Term 2.) Instead, she used newspapers and teenage publications which have a high interest rating with her students. The school library was also able to offer some support materials such as high-interest, low-level-of-difficulty paper-backs.

The library was the second special feature of the school. As well as trying to build up a collection of material for remedial and reluctant readers, the librarian had these books attractively displayed in a central location. Students had access to the library before and after school, on an individual basis through a permission chit from their teacher, or when their whole class was booked into the library for a period.

The librarian had developed a collection of videos. This was partly made possible by the Parents and Citizens' Association, and partly by a Schools Commission grant. The grant was taken out in the name of the librarian at a nearby school, and paid for a special clerical/technical assistant for a group of schools 'pooling' their video resources. The assistant co-ordinated the holdings, facilitating exchange between the schools, and provided a copying service. Continuation of this scheme depends on renewal of the Schools Commission grant, which is made on a yearly basis.

Most librarians have a budget governed by the Library Services acquisition grant and a proportion of money from school amenities fees and the Parents and Citizens' Association. In this school there was no set amount allowed for the librarian, although the P. & C. paid for anything within reason. Book purchases tended to be made from the acquisitions grants list rather than selection from whatever was commercially available. The local public library also consulted with, and supported the school librarian.

A third feature was the library in the general staff room. This contained a set of books on language across the curriculum, available for all teachers to read.

CASE STUDY 5—LARGE METROPOLITAN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

They used to call this school 'Sing-Sing' - three floors of red bricks, grey concrete, metal-barred railings around closed courtyards, in a low-to-middle socio-economic area. In 1975 it seethed with 1621 students and was bursting at the seams. When we got there in 1978, the trees had grown, the stairwells and breezeways were decorated with students' artwork, sculptures and hanging mobiles, and student numbers had been reduced to 1040.

In spite of the traditional architectural design, the school seemed to be very open. In our initial contact interview, the Principal automatically invited the two deputies to be present, because they operated as a team. In the subsequent, more detailed interview with the Principal, one of the deputies again participated, because, as the Principal put it: 'Bob's been here longer than I have, and will be able to answer a lot of questions more fully'.

The administration seemed to operate on the principles of keeping the staff happy, providing the maximum number of choices for students, and providing the maximum opportunity for their learning and personal development. The relationships between staff and administration seemed very amicable.

THE READING SCHEME

The special reading scheme (actually a language development programme, but referred to by everyone as the Reading Scheme, for convenience) grew out of the perceived needs of the students, but also illustrates the principles of negotiation and co-operation on which this school functions. The Deputy Principal explained its origins:

> *We did a survey here on the number of children of migrant origin for the Department. The definition of a migrant child was one who had one or both parents born outside of an English-speaking country ... I think we had about 270 children out of a population of about 1100 - highest but not frighteningly high. It seemed pretty clear too to a lot of people on the staff that there were far too many children in this school with far too many problems associated with reading and communication skills.*

The scheme started with what the staff now regard as fairly narrow purposes. That changed fairly quickly as their collective understandings grew:

Deputy Principal: *The scheme started out for reading, but now, of course, it has changed to language development. We very quickly switched from reading to language across the curriculum, mainly to improve the reading and communication skills for the students in all areas of the work. It was generally accepted that the students with language problems were performing below their potential, if you like, in all of their subjects... Therefore it was necessary to try and do something to improve their literacy. We played around with all these words - literacy, reading, comprehension, language, etc. - across the curriculum. What has it come to rest at now? Language development? Any label that we put on it was too restrictive. That's why we kept changing its name. Reading is a general term which we still use, because it's easy. It's understood by everybody here that reading doesn't mean only reading.*

> *Certainly it is understood by anybody who has anything to do with the scheme at all. That was really the philosophy behind it. These children were not really performing as well as they had a right to perform in all of their subjects, because of a fundamental lack in communication and language skills.*

The high degree of consensus amongst the staff about the need to provide wider opportunities for language development meant that the programme could be run on a voluntary basis, as the Principal explained:

> *Yes, they were lucky in the sense that they had more volunteers than were necessary and they had a good spread throughout the subjects - art teachers, home economics teachers, etc. - who came in, so that some scheme was possible. And, of course, there's the language co-ordinator who is three-fifths time on the job.*
>
> *The language co-ordinator was originally a science teacher who was funded through the Schools Commission grant to develop the programme, take some of the classes, and organize in-service meetings for interested staff members.*

Access to the specially equipped reading-rooms was negotiated between the Deputy Principal and the staff involved in a similar way:

> *We made sure that every class spent some time in one of those rooms. There's as much flexibility as possible built into the scheme. Some of the teachers - those who were most desirous of it - would have all four, say, of the Year 8 classes in the special reading-room. Some others say, 'I don't want all four of them there. I want two there and two in the library.' So I tailor the timetable to fit those people. Those who definitely wanted four got four.*

The Deputy Principal attributed some of the success of the scheme to Schools Commission funding:

> *I think the fact that we got the Schools Commission grant through the influence of Mr P. was very important. I think the scheme might not have fared so well if it hadn't had this monetary backing. It makes a big difference if you can present children to a scheme through those rooms that you've got up there, with carpet on the floor and beanbags, nice curtains at the windows and stacks and stacks of books that change every week.*
>
> *The kids get a bit shirty sometimes if the teacher is away and I take them out of the reading-room and say, 'I'm going to put you into one of the ordinary rooms to be supervised, because I haven't got a teacher'.*

Mr P. also referred to the value of the Schools Commission grant:

> *Maybe we're in a very lucky position where we've just had about $15 000 to spend from the Schools Commission. In actual fact the grant was $34 000, but $22 000 of that (it was $12 000 we had) $22 000 was the salary. But we've had $12 000 to spend. That has been a tremendous help, because it meant that we could go ahead and set up a language room with the things we wanted - a more-than-adequate supply of books and magazines. We were able*

> *to buy other things, like those induction-loop earphones - that sort of equipment with which we were able to set those rooms up. We would never have been able to get it at other times.*

Mr P. and Mr I., the language co-ordinator, plan to extend the Reading Scheme into upper school the next year, with reading and reading-for-pleasure options for Year 11 students.

THE ENGLISH STAFF

When the Principal and Deputy were asked if there were any particular features that affected teaching and learning in English in the school, they referred to the teaching staff.

Deputy Principal: *No, I think that the particular features that we have at school are features of the people teaching the subjects. I think, for example, we're very lucky in the field of media, say, to have Mr H., who is obviously very keen on this type of work and he takes the trouble to keep himself informed on current procedures. We have blokes like Mr F., who had nine years in private industry in the field in Channel 9 or something. Those things can occur in any school and depend upon the luck of the draw, I think, when the staffing lists come out. The very nature of the senior masters has a lot to do with the general tone and enthusiasm in the English department. Again, that's just a personality thing that we're fortunate in. We are fortunate with the type of staff that we mostly have teaching here, in that they're all pretty keen. I'm not sure why, but we haven't had anyone teaching English who doesn't want to and that makes a big difference. If you have a person who really considers himself a social studies teacher or a French teacher or something who has to take English, then that class doesn't do so well.*

The English staff as a group also seemed to have diverse interests and talents. One senior master had been a music teacher and still regarded himself as one.

> *I am not trained, nor am I mentally attuned, to be an English teacher. All my training - and this includes two units of English at Uni. - has been directed towards music. I was, AND STILL AM, a music teacher and teach English only because it is expedient for me to do so. I love the English language and I adore English literature. But I love and adore them as expressions of individual souls*
>
> *(a) expressing their individuality, their passions, their desires for a better world; and*
>
> *(b) fitting into a historical pattern, either attuned to, or at odds with, their age.*
>
> *As a musician I have been trained to listen to form and style. How does Beethoven maintain the tradition into which he was born and how does he subvert it and either change it himself or open the way for others to change it? And this I bring to my appreciation of literature and obviously will influence my students towards a similar attitude.*

Another English teacher had been a music critic for the morning newspaper; a third had been employed in television before becoming an English teacher; and a fourth had a strong interest in media courses. This diversity of interests seemed to lend strength to the English staff as a whole, given that (as the Deputy said) all the staff were happy to teach English.

One of the features related to the happiness of the English staff was the professional freedom and responsibility mentioned by Senior Master P:

> *The thing that I think you need most of all is freedom - the freedom to move where you want to move. I'm quite convinced that, with English teaching, it's your own enthusiasm which is so important... I think here we are particularly free.*

Senior Master P. related this freedom to stability of staffing, both at the administrative and classroom teacher levels.

> *Ideas have been coming through in all sorts of areas. Perhaps in some ways (I don't know, it's hard to put your finger on why in an area like this) that it should have developed, but I think we've had fair stability in principals.*
>
> *Stability of senior staff has been very good. And I put that down to one of the reasons why we have developed a spirit or an atmosphere. I've been here a long time - roughly 25 years in this place, with only one break of about three or four years. This is something which this school has. Over the years it has had a very strong senior staff, and in the English field, of course, the fact of my being here for so long has probably established a pattern.*

The Senior Master felt that stability of staffing could have direct advantages for teachers and students, not just in the development of a significant pool of resource materials but also in the development of a collective understanding about teaching and learning. He explained that rapid changes of staff could affect students adversely.

> *Well, you get changing patterns straight away. You have a teacher come in with a different set of textbooks... You get changes of approach and changes of ideas. I think there are so many areas you get where continuity gives you a direction, where you know where you're going, and your staff know where you're going. I think this is tremendously important.*

Stability and continuity of staff were not confined to the senior staff. Only one of the English staff had been in the school for less than two years. The two most inexperienced English teachers were in their third year of teaching. The two senior masters have been in the school 25 and 8 years respectively, and showed no desire to leave.

This sort of stability had a number of observable spin-offs:

. The teachers knew one another, and did a lot of talking together.

. The teachers knew the students, and vice versa. There was a personal warmth in many of the teacher-student interactions.

. It allowed for long-term planning and getting things done, as evidenced by the reading scheme (see *The Reading Scheme*, above), the massive bank of resources, and plans for an alternative upper-school English course, to mention the more obvious items.

HOW IS ENGLISH SEEN BY THE TEACHERS IN THIS SCHOOL?

English teachers in this school tended to focus on the needs and interests of their students. Senior Master P. expressed his concern for students in terms of the effect of subject specialization.

> *I reckon that is the biggest crime we've perpetrated in education. You're teaching subjects ... It's so frustrating. There's a course to get through for the TAE and that becomes the most important factor. You have got to get through this, instead of teaching kids.*

A more formal statement of the nature of English was to be found in the policy statement developed by Senior Master D.

> *'A wide range of activities that allow and encourage self-expression in our students. In contrast to other faculties, English teachers are not concerned to stress factual material. There is no course to be covered in English. Rather, there is the recognition of the needs of the individuals making up each class group. English teachers are there to encourage their students to be articulate, to question received values, to examine social and moral issues surrounding them and report on these in language suitable to the depth of the study and the level of the student's maturity. To this end, specific skills are required, but there is no hierarchical order in which they should be acquired.'*

Senior Master P. concurred with the above statement.

> *Following on from that statement, I don't see any real content. I think this is something that I would like to see more and more worked out between teacher and students at the beginning of each term, or however often it is necessary, where you decide on what is current. Very often things come up in the paper. Last year, for instance, there was a big fuss over the Aborigines out here at Saunders Street. We were reading 'Jimmy Blacksmith' at the time and this prompted a lot of discussion. We hopped in a bus and went out to Saunders Street and interviewed some Aborigines out there. That provided content for ten lessons and we just left everything else and put all our energies into this. I think that is another thing. This formalized business of sitting around in the classroom is not good. You get a lot more out of youngsters in general education outside the classroom, with first-hand experiences. I have had a lot of experience with High School Certificate kids (what we call High School Certificates, these non-academics) in this sort of activity and you get all your integrated studies. You get your oral work with interviewing the manager in the classroom, then you send Bill Smith over to go and interview him. And he comes back with his chest up and says: 'The boss said this to me'. You practise using the telephone, writing letters to him. You write a letter of thanks; you find out what goes on in the factory or whatever. That sort of activity to me is real education.*

Senior Master D. also emphasized the need for discussing current issues with his students.

> *I try to make it anything that is topical - anything that brings up social issues, without getting into social studies. Obviously in social studies they're going to be talking about zero population*

> *growth and socialism versus capitalism and all these sorts of things. I want to talk about them too, but I feel that I can approach them from a more humane viewpoint, and to me, that makes them English, whereas they would approach them more from economics and learning about the country. But I'm concerned about people and reactions of the people. To me that is English. This is why I read stories to the kids.*

Senior Master P. expressed some concern about the way freedom is used in English.

> *Much criticism has been made of the so-called modern approach and I must confess I sometimes feel we have gone too far. I have no desire to go back to the prescriptive Departmental curriculum nor the unholy demands of inspectorial programming but sometimes I see the lack of direction and too many things being missed. This was what attracted me to the Houghton Mifflin Programme (Course Book). At the same time I was fully aware of the dangers of swinging back too far, hence our limit of two or three periods a week maximum.*

Senior Master D. felt that there was a danger of a highly structured programme taking over from the teacher:

> *How on earth can you teach if you don't do it your way? And you will obviously do best what you're doing your way. I must let the teacher teach the way he or she wants to, because that's the way they will do it best! I would loathe being told, 'You will take your lesson this way'. This is why, in fact, I have floundered so much with the Houghton Mifflin course, because I did like it very much - because, I felt, this is saying it far better than I can say it. So I was tending to read the thing, instead of getting the gist of it and then doing it my way.*

With the concern for students at the centre of their thinking, teachers have to build a certain amount of choice into the work that students do. Senior Master P. described it this way:

> *If I had to find a word for it, I'd say 'negotiated' .... I like, with my school kids, to get together and try to work out a unit of work with things that they are interested in and let them follow their interests too. 'What do you want to know? Not what I think you ought to know - the plot, the themes and these sorts of things. What do you think you ought to know about it? It's easy for me to put it up on the board. Learn this, this and this.' But when they themselves have to scratch their heads and say, 'Well what do I want to know?' That's real education to me.*

Senior Master D. builds in an element of freedom for his students by allowing them to decide when they will do their work.

> *I give them several weeks' work and say, 'Here, there's three or four weeks' work to do. Now you go ahead and do it when you are in the mood to do it'. And I feel that in this way I get the best work out of them, because they're doing it when they are relaxed and - sure, I also get some dreadful, rushed work.*

Other English teachers also allow their students a degree of freedom. Two of the teachers worked out a series of contract programmes with their students. One of these teachers also described choices in longer written assignments.

Teacher 1: *With the Year 10s I have three assignments that Year 10s generally enjoy doing. They do them in the order that they want to do them. They have time to do it in class, but when we're in the reading-room, if they want to read they can read instead.*

What about study of language?

The pressure of the 'back-to-basics' lobby has been felt in this school, and responded to in varying degrees.

Teacher 1: *One change of direction that I notice is that we are going back to basics at the moment - or at least we are 'discussing' it. The articles in 'Backchat' (a newsletter for teachers of English) gave the negative side some useful ammunition, though I'm afraid the affirmative didn't wholly accept them. The accountability and ledger-type programming that such an alternative offers makes it too attractive to people who aren't really committed one way or the other. Besides, it offers a way out and makes you do your job, i.e. teaching boring grammar to bored (and hence disruptive) students. I still think that many teachers disapprove of lessons where they don't have to dominate and dictate.*

In his self-description, Teacher 2 emphasized an experiential approach to language development:

> *This is my second year of teaching English. I suppose during that time the most important influence on me has been the discovery that children learn more by doing and talking than they do by writing and listening. Secondly, language is, I believe, learnt by using it. Seeing or hearing it is not sufficient. Therefore language usage is, to me, all important and the opportunity to explore language in various ways.*
>
> *The best results I've had in my short time of teaching have been those which involve physical activity being transferred into language - for example, improvised drama, used in association with the reading of a poem or a short story. A visit to the river-side was extremely successful, which was converted into short stories or experiences on that particular excursion... It seems to me that English teaching has taken on a greater freedom to explore language in various ways and I certainly approve wholeheartedly of this change. It seems to me that at least the spoken language is being recognized as being equal to, if not more important than, the written language in formulating ideas, concepts relating to real-life experiences.*

Opinions varied among the teachers interviewed about the amount of time spent on language study and exercises. Senior Master P. said:

> *I don't think we really spend a great deal of time on practice.*
>
> *But in terms of formal exercises, I do very little... Personally, I wouldn't spend one period in five, less than one in five. Mine would always be done in context. I'm most emphatic about that. At the moment we still ask the*

> *Year 11s to get that Wheeler and Walshe thing, which I hate. I fail every year with some members of the staff who want that book here, even though they may not necessarily use it. You probably would find some of them using one period a week or so on Wheeler and Walshe, which is a purely formal set of exercises, and I think that is a dead loss.*
>
> *A couple of years back when I did have a Year 11, I used to just say to them, 'Right, you can do that at home. I haven't got time in school to spend on it. If you feel you want to do some grammar and you think you're going to get something out of it, you do it.'*

The Houghton Mifflin programme referred to by several teachers did seem to be in widespread use. Senior Master D. expressed some reservations about it:

> *The main thing I feel about it is that it gives you the specific work and specific lessons to do. As I told you when I was talking to you about using it, it almost tells you what words to say and when.*

Interviewer: *Is that an advantage?*

Senior Master D: *In the way that it has kept me with my nose glued to the book, no; it's a distinct disadvantage. But on the other hand, it is very well done, I think. And the lessons that I have taken from it, I have felt, have accomplished something. The thing is it has a whole lot of lessons on finding out the main facts, sorting out facts from opinions, parts of speech even and finding the subject in a sentence - things like this which are very well done, extremely well done.*

Interviewer: *What is the value of following right through the book, for instance? Is it just labour saving?*

Senior Master D: *No, it is labour saving, but I feel also that if I follow this through I have covered everything, whereas if I get a source book that tells you all about nouns, verbs and adjectives, for example, and I take a bit from here and a bit from there and a bit from somewhere else and give these lessons - I suppose I do cover everything that I want to cover anyway, but it's got the* ad hoc *feel about it, whereas the Houghton Mifflin is a superbly laid-out course... I also feel that it helps the children.*

Inteviewer: *Does Mr P. like it?*

Senior Master D: *Yes, he is very keen. In fact, I am able to do it only two lessons a week. Everybody else on the staff is doing it three lessons a week. And I am now starting to feel the lack.*

Interviewer: *Do the kids like it?*

Senior Master D: *Yes. It's a beautiful series. The kids do like it. The stories are good; they love reading them. They have what are called evaluative questions and interpretative questions. These are very good for answering... They go deeper than the ordinary literal comprehension.*

The interviewer then focused the proportion of time spent in language study through the Houghton Mifflin Course, and the proportion spent on extended writing or talking.

Interviewer: *And can I ask another question about it? Three periods a week out of five periods - that means that for three-fifths of your total time for English, the students are doing primarily analytic work. If you look through the file of total work done by a student, how much do you consider that they're getting enough experience of writing continuous..?*

Senior Master D: *No, this in fact is the big fault with it. We are all finding that we're not getting enough continuous writing done. I am getting more than the others, because I've only got it two periods.*

Interviewer: *In some senses, however good it is, you have to look at the overall picture as to what kind of language experience the kids are getting.*

Senior Master D: *Yes, I'm wondering whether it might not be a better idea to reduce it to two periods and not worry about getting through so much of it - in fact, make the course last for two years.*

In contrast, Teacher 2 saw a different focus in his teaching.

> *I think my main emphasis in teaching English is the use of language. I only have one Year 9 class to teach this year in English and have found a great need for encouragement of open expression and development of the enjoyment of communication, so that they feel a need for improved skills, rather than trying to improve their skills to enable them to communicate. I think that's putting the cart before the horse.*

Value of student opinion

For some teachers there seemed to be contradictions inherent between the amount of time spent in language-study activities, and the value that they placed on student opinion and interaction in small groups. For example, Senior Master P., who is very enthusiastic about the Houghton Mifflin reading programme, also said:

> *I'm trying to keep out of the picture. I've got to the stage where I realize more and more that what I feel and say is relatively unimportant. What you're after is to get kids to move forward in their own thinking.*

Senior Master D. felt that he did value the personal opinions and experiences of his students, but that this was not necessarily a perception that the students shared:

> *I hope so. Yes, I feel I do. My Year 12 class doesn't, as a*

> *matter of fact. They feel that if their opinions differ from mine, then they get lower marks. Because I don't put a mark on their work, I haven't been able to convince them that this is true. I feel it is very true. I value their opinion as their opinion. If I think it's wrong I tell them, but I am marking their English, not their opinion. And it's the same with the lower class.*

Teacher 1 also expressed a firm belief in the value of student's opinions and ideas.

> *If we're looking at something, it is more interesting as a teacher to hear what they've got to say, rather than just to repeat what you think. They must be because it's their thoughts and so on that forms what they learn, and if it's just what you think about something that they write down on a piece of paper, it's probably completely meaningless for them.*

This belief seemed to be part of a more generalized theory about the way in which people learn.

> *I don't know how children learn;only that they, like adults, are learning about something - even just boredom all the time. Content lessons don't help them all learn more than they probably would anyway. It's debatable whether they ever learn more of what we want to learn in such a lesson.*
>
> *The basic suppositions I would have about learning really relate to its diffuse nature. But I do see learning as being a positive process, and one that schools can promote. I believe that programmes should be as open as possible, so that students can move within them to find areas, and even focal points that have interest.*
>
> *Relevance seems to be the key. Students will pursue something of interest and learn complex vocabulary to allow their pursuit to continue as far as their interest will take them, e.g. electronics. People seem to want to communicate and will work towards better communication, providing they don't feel so threatened by it that they can't/won't put themselves at risk. This applies to both oral and written communication and is something that is easy to overlook when you 'do' talks or essays.*
>
> *Teachers can be important guides for the development of language but most people I know believe that they learnt almost everything about language through reading or through checking books or how something was meant to be done ... I think that my best results come from assignments, seminars run by the students themselves and whole class 'parliamentary' debates.*
>
> *All of these give students the chance to organize and direct themselves - this seems to be vital for learning, and I'm always thrilled with the results they produce.*

Use of small groups

The significance of student opinion and the value of talking for learning seemed to be behind the responses to interview questions on the use of small groups and the preferred classroom arrangement. Senior Master D. said that he didn't re-arrange the classroom to suit his teaching practice, but still expressed strong views about the arrangement of the classroom, and the use of small groups.

Senior Master D: *... I walk into a classroom and just take the set-up that's there, because it doesn't worry me. I like the idea of the children sitting in groups. This is why I use room M2. It's carpeted and it has round tables, so you can sit four or five in a group at a table and they talk away. But I think it is a far better situation than kids in rows. I can't stand that. But on the other hand, if I walk into a classroom and it's got the desks placed in rows, unless I want to do something specific, I just go ahead and do what I've got to do.*

Interviewer: *What benefits do you see from such small groups?*

Senior Master D: *I think that learning from each other - they're talking to each other; they're giving each other ideas.*

The whole thing has to be as informal as can be, I think, so that if they get off the track what does it matter? They do usually pull each other up if they can't understand what the other one is saying, and this makes them express themselves more clearly in an extremely informal situation.

Similar opinions on the value of small-group work were expressed by Teacher 1:

> *If I had a classroom I think I would arrange it in groups, which I did last year... It's more convenient in group discussions, because the kids really communicate with each other. They tell each other what you really meant. In discussion they get a chance to air their opinions. A lot of kids will be very active in a small group and very responsible, but in a whole class discussion they won't feel they are able to make a contribution, because they're not good enough and someone will rubbish them. If they are doing an activity that one child might feel a bit scared about doing, when they're in a group they can feel stronger; they feel that they have more support; they can do more in time, which is convenient for me. If you don't want to have everything done in forty minutes on forty-minute pieces of paper, you can get kids working together and helping each other. It just seems to be more worth while for them and for you. They often understand each other a lot more quickly and effectively than others would, so they can help each other more.*

Teacher 2 also expressed a strong belief in the educational value of small-group work.

> *Small group work is vital, I believe, if students are to be encouraged to communicate their ideas and share experiences. Listening skills are also encouraged by small-group work. I've used small-group techniques in various ways. I suppose the most regular method that I have used is just spontaneously asking the class to discuss a particular question that may be under discussion in their small groups for a few moments and then ask them their findings. With one particular Year 10 class last year I instituted a weekly discussion lesson, in which the class discussed questions that were suggested by themselves. I*

> *found this highly successful. It took some time for them to settle down to becoming familiar with this method of operation, but once they got used to it they learnt, I believe, a great deal. I certainly did also.*

The perception that we, as outsiders, formed of openness, co-operation and liberalism at the administrative level was articulated by Senior Master P. In trying to trace out where the students' ability to work in small discussion groups came from, he said:

> *My guess is that it stems largely from the relationship that exists between staff and students. There is very little of the authoritarian attitude. Teachers and students - it's a peculiar thing, too. It is hard to know where it stems from, but there has always been an open-door policy, particularly in administration, going back for the last three or four principals that have been here. They have always been encouraged, you know - the door was open for kids to go and talk to them and to staff generally.*

A place of your own

As well as valuing small group work, the teachers interviewed also found it desirable to display student work. This led to discussions on the advantages of teachers having rooms of their own. Senior Master P. expressed the need this way:

> *The last week of term we took the English staff up to Gooseberry Hill Primary School, with the expressed view of showing them what primary school looks like with all the children's work on display. We've taken some of our senior pupils with us too, because, when you look at our rooms here, they horrify me with the bareness of them. When you tackle teachers they say, 'What's the good? You put the work up on the board and you go back the next period or the next day and it has been disfigured or is gone'...*
>
> *'Not having a room of your own' is the biggest cry the teachers make. 'If we had a room of our own we could do something with it. We could display the work; we could do all this sort of thing.' And there is no doubt in my mind that this is a very real problem and a very real criticism. The whole atmosphere changes as soon as you walk into a room where the kids' work is there to be seen and to be examined.*

Senior Master D. expressed a similar opinion.

> *I think it is of great value to do this (display student work) and we don't do it in a school like this, because very few teachers have their own rooms; or even if they have got their own rooms, they aren't teaching in them all the time. It is so difficult to keep it maintained there and the other thing is that some teachers teach every lesson in a different room and they just wouldn't have anywhere they could display the stuff ... I would love to have a place. For example, Mr H. does this in T9, because he teaches there nearly all the time, and he's got a lot of stuff from his media groups on display.*
>
> *They're about the only two people in the school who use that room, so they can look after it. And this makes a big difference. Miss A., while she hasn't got a big display up in her room, in fact came back in the holidays with her class and painted that room, because she teaches in it all the time and it's as pretty*

> *as a picture. So that's at least something.*

Teacher 1 was quite forceful on the subject.

> *We've put up the Year 8s work and it's been torn down; we've put up posters and they've been lost. You can put things up, but that's on the proviso that it will be defaced or wrecked or something. If you have your own room and if you're in there and if everyone that goes in there co-operates, O.K.; but if they don't, then no, you bomb out. You can put things up in the library. I have intended to do that, but haven't ... I think the kids get a bit of a thrill out of it. I think they enjoy reading what's up on notice-boards and if it's theirs I think it makes them feel proud - prouder than they would like to admit, particularly for the older ones. I had Year 11s last year who made some comments about Year 8 and 9 work that I had up on the board. The upshot of that was that they really wouldn't mind having their own essays put up, which was a bit surprising. I found this surprising, because I thought they would be more mature in their outlook and embarrassed about it.*

Teachers also expressed a need for specialized rooms, such as the reading-rooms, and drama rooms.

Senior Master D:	*I would like to see a proper drama-room set up for the school. To me that would be a major thing. It would be available, not just for drama options, but if I in my English wanted to do some activities. I'd have it set up in a large room — a large, carpeted space with no desks and chairs. That's all you do need.*
Teacher 1:	*I think that another thing we're keen on doing is getting carpeting in more rooms for drama activities. M2 is the room I was using for drama, but that is going to be a reading-room. Otherwise, T9 is booked right up and everything else doesn't have carpet. Doing drama outside is all right, except the kids don't like having everyone watching from the quadrangle. If you do it behind the library the gardeners want to water most of the time. Also you have to jump out of the way when the delivery truck comes.*

Teachers mentioned few other constraints, apart from the difficulty (even in this school) of taking students on excursions, and the constraints of TAE courses and examinations, and BSE assessments.

STREAMING, MARKING, ASSESSMENT, BSE AND TAE

This section looks like a grab-bag of left-over issues, but for many teachers, the issues above are inextricably interwoven.

Streaming

The two senior masters and Teacher 1 spoke out strongly against streaming, levels and labels. Senior Master P. said:

> *I hate the division of students into Basic, Intermediate and Advanced. It seems dreadful to me to label Year 8 students (in fact any year, for that matter). Hence we delay as long*

> *as possible and don't do it until December because it is so soul-destroying. We are trying to break down years of tradition. I am certain that the division into Basic, Intermediate and Advanced has not any real incentive value at all and rather it has a negative reaction for many students.*

Senior Master D. supported this.

> *I prefer them unstreamed, because I feel I can cope. I feel teachers ought to be able to cope with students in a natural situation, that streaming is bad for the children at all levels. The bad ones get labelled that they're bad and the good don't need to do any work. To me it's anti-social, the whole process and I feel that, especially with a subject like English, I can set students at any academic level the same work and I simply assess it at their level. What does it matter? You don't have to give them different work. I can't see why other subjects can't do this too, but I think English is ideal for doing this sort of thing.*

Teacher 1 was also strongly in favour of students being placed in unstreamed classes.

> *I just don't think you gain enough by having them streamed. I think it's very bad socially for the kids to be streamed. I think it is very easy to be traditional if you have streamed classes. I think a lot of bad blood is bred between the kids at various levels between upper, middle and lower groups. We've seen that in the very small experience we had this year. The kids were very neurotic, very insecure about where they belonged, who was better than who. The kids can tend to be élitist and that just encourages it for the wrong reasons. When I was at school classes were streamed and I didn't like that then either, because the top classes felt that they were better than the other classes.*

There was some indication that not all English teachers on the staff agreed with the unstreamed policy. Senior Master D. said:

> *There is a fair bit of difference. Some teachers are happy enough to leave the classes in Years 8 and 9 unstreamed, but they maintain that in Year 10 you need streaming, because the children know anyway by then, so it doesn't make any difference to them. And because they have to decide soon on the courses they are going to go in for in upper school, therefore they should be streamed. I must say that both Mr P. and I don't agree with this and we're holding out like mad against it. Fortunately we have enough support on the staff to keep ungraded classes right through.*

Marking

Teachers interviewed also expressed strong attitudes against marking (i.e. placing a grade) on students' written work. Senior Master P. explained that, for him, numerical marking varied from one year group to another.

> *It varies from lower to upper school. With my First Years, I don't think I've given them a mark that they've seen the whole year. I have looked at their work and I might have assessed it and put it in their marks-books. (I've got two or three - not many - that I've done that with). I'm endeavouring*

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> *all the time to get the youngster to be with me, or for me to be with them, when I'm going through their work. But they demand - they are at me all the time because they want to know what's it worth. What's it worth? I think we overmark lots of things. I like to do a lot more of giving kids their own work and their neighbour's work - spreading it around and letting the youngsters assess their peers' work and discussing with their peers what is going on. Kids enjoy doing this and I certainly like it. But it is much harder with the 11s and 12s not to give a mark, because they'll fight you for it. But what was it worth? Now this term with Year 12 I don't give marks at all and yet they are at me all the time ...*
>
> *If I had my way I would scrub marks altogether. They are obnoxious things.*

Teacher 2 said that he used no system of marks on written work at all.

> *I use no grading or assessment system on any of their work. I feel that grades only assist those who need little help and penalize those who have a lower self-esteem. I therefore make it quite clear to the class that I don't believe that marks or grades are of any great assistance on their work, although I discuss with them how they are going towards the end of each term. I think this is important, because they do have to rely on marks to a certain extent, but certainly I make it my policy to give constructive comments on their work, rather than marks.*

Marks are a contentious issue between the teachers and some students, and occasionally between teachers, as the interview with Teacher 1 showed:

> *I see the assessment they get at the end of the year as reflecting the work they do during the year. So if we spend time on something, they get an assessment, because that is going to reflect what's happened step by step. I don't give them marks. They get a comment which tells them of what they've done that's good and possibly suggestions of areas of improvement. Sometimes they get a comment which has got nothing but praise, and perhaps my personal response to what they've done because it is so tremendous. At the moment they're getting yellow stars, which are meant to be golds, that tell them that they have done better than usual and that I am pleased with them. But the mark goes in my marks-book. If a lot of pressure is put on me, I'll say that I'm pleased with work or that I'm not and the stars are doing that. So the ones that were very conscious of marks are not asking for them now, because they know they've done well by the star that they've got on it. One of the teachers accused me of playing games with them and that the kids deserve to know their marks.*

Senior Master D. also resisted the pressure to put marks on student work.

Senior Master D:	*I grade practically everything. I don't put a mark on it for them, though in my marks-book I do.*
Interviewer:	*What does grade mean? A ten out of ten or..?*
Senior Master D:	*I give it a numerical grade in my mark-book. Then I put various copious comments; it drives me mad, because I take so long to mark. I feel that I*

> *must justify the fact that I haven't given them a mark for one thing, because they want the mark.*

Although Senior Master D. does not put marks on student work, his assessment system is based on numerical grades; however, he does not demand specific assessments from other teachers.

> *I rely on them, when I ask for the assessment whenever it is, to have not just dragged it out of the air, but to seriously consider this, which, I presume, means having a set of marks from all of their pupils. But I put no restrictions on them whatever. I ask them for what is their assessment of this student; how they do it is their business.*

This statement was supported by Teacher 1.

> *I'm not required to submit works. How I assess the kids, in lower school in particular, is completely up to me. Mr D. has never wanted to look at my marks. He even said to me in Second Year that I'd done too much marking in First Year. He showed me his marks-book and said 'They're the only marks that I've got', but he didn't say 'Let me see', or anything like that and he never has.*

BSE comparability tests

The influence of the BSE comparability tests is reduced as much as possible within the English Department. Neither of the senior masters places much value on the tests or the results:

Senior Master P: *The BSE affects us virtually nil in Year 8. We only do it when we can't get out of it. This last one that's been done we didn't do. We just said we don't want to be bothered with it. There are a couple of compulsory ones somewhere along the line which you can't get out of.*

Interviewer: *When those figures come in, they go to the Principal. Do they go to the senior staff?*

Senior Master P: *Yes we can look at them when we want to.*

Interviewer: *So they're available then.*

Senior Master P: *They come to us really.*

Interviewer: *Do you identify the pupils?*

Senior Master P: *Well, no, not really. I don't think that anybody bothers to go back and look at them again.*

Senior Master D. found the BSE comparability system more frustrating.

> *I do as few of them as I possibly can. In a way I rather like the one at the beginning of Year 8, because it grades the kids according to the entire population of the State. We don't grade them or anything, but we just go ahead and teach them. The thing that annoys me is that at the end of the year I'm still supposed to have 33% Basic, no matter how good a teacher I've been...*
>
> *It makes me so mad. Where, in fact, is the incentive for me to teach? And just what does this mean? It means that a kid is graded.*

> *We say with the Achievement Certificate we're not going to grade them until the end of their tenth year. What do we do? We give them a test the day they walk into the school and that's their grade for the rest of their school career ... I had a heck of an argument with the moderator last year, because I wanted to alter the marks from his figures. I said I'm dealing with people, not figures. I do not give tests for the assessments ... Give the staff a sheet and say, 'Let me know how many Advanced students you want to give, how many Intermediates, how many Basics.'*

Teacher 1 found the comparability tests and levels less disturbing, although it was evident from her interview that there had been some difficulties in the past:

> *It's a nice, quiet period, the period that they do the BSE comparability test and that's about as much as I think about it. I haven't been restricted, in that I haven't been told lately to get X number in Advanced, or do this or do that with marks, so it hasn't had much to do with me. I see it as being almost a political thing.*

The Tertiary Admissions Examination

The Tertiary Admissions Examination posed different kinds of problems for Teacher 1.

> *You are much more conscious of that. In my Year 11 classes there are some very bright kids who are very conscious of it, who I think have it rammed down their throats in all their other subjects. I think I feel it's a testing time for me as much as the kids. I have to teach them to the extent that they pass the exam and make it possible for them to. Even the Year 11 exam itself, I never have any idea of what is going to be in it until it is given to the kids. Then you think, 'Oh I didn't do any style this year and they're going to get style and they don't know how to do it!' So I am very conscious of it, and conscious, in some ways, that that's what is wrong for a number of the kids who aren't coping with it and who aren't interested in tertiary courses.*

The TAE accounted, to some extent, for the gap between Teacher 1's intentions and what she was able to accomplish:

> *There's always a gap, in that you plan to do something and the kids may or may not be in the mood to do it. I know there are some lessons I feel I ought to do more of yet I don't do them, because when it comes to them I feel I'm going to have to force the kids to be interested too much. I feel that with the Year 11s now, the TAE is putting pressure on me to do the types of activities that they feel will be more valid for English. They want to keep more in line. But in upper school, if two classes are doing comprehension or literature in a certain manner, then there is pressure on you to do that too. I don't want to feel that my kids are going to go into the exam and say, 'We can't cope with this exam, yet we should be able to'. So there's a lot of that in upper school. In lower school what you do depends more on the kids, because you don't have to do anything very much that you don't want to do. Occasionally I do things that I think might be good for them - things that aren't terribly pleasant; but most of the time it's where they are. That's where you start programming and working out what you're going to do.*

Senior Master P. was more vehement about the conflict between doing things suitable to the needs and the interests of the students, and preparing them for the external exam:

> *In English, the TAE demands that they have to write a particular sort of essay. If you've looked at the topics of the essays, they are mainly dealing with social issues that are beyond most of the kids - wrapped up with all sorts of quotations and things. They're just so hopelessly above the ordinary run-of-the-mill kid. Last year after the last exam we tackled the examiners very strongly about this. I'm hoping this year that there will be a definite improvement. But nowhere in those essays is there anything where a kid could use his imagination, or express his own experiences. It's a very, very poor selection ... The course is still dominated by the examination and I don't care what anybody says. What am I going to do this afternoon? Here's a concrete case. I'm going to give some kids an objective test. Why? Because they're going to have to do an objective test in the exam; they need to know what it looks like, they need to have the feel of it, so I've got to spend two periods this afternoon doing that. And if they didn't have the exam hanging over them, I wouldn't do it. And yet you have to spend so many hours of your time allotment to do that sort of thing. The same applies to the style programme. This business of compare and contrast two pieces of writing - the kids will have to do this in the exam. If you send them into the exam without adequate preparation for it, they get butchered. I marked Leaving papers for years. You see it every year - kids who have got no attack to the question at all. This is a long process, this business of teaching the kids to attack style. It's a hard road, and the weaker the students are, the harder it is, and all the time you're feeling, 'What am I wasting my time for, with these kids who have got no business to be doing the TAE exam anyway? I'm having to make their life miserable—my life miserable—by trying to do things I don't want to do'. In Year 11 you sure can shut a blind eye - the old Nelson touch. But when it comes down to Year 12 and the exam is beginning to loom, you are forced to spend so much of the time on the exam, writing essays, endless essays - one a week I get out of my kids. And this is the only way they're going to measure up in some form to getting through that exam which dominates their thinking and your thinking. The sooner we get rid of that the better as far as I am concerned. I can't understand why the tertiary institutions don't conduct their own, or why they have them at all.*

Senior Master D. supported this point of view.

> *I'd be happy to see it gone and I'm so glad that we have got the 50% school assessment. Not that I'm at all convinced that this is being used by the tertiary institutions, but at least I feel I'm doing something by making sure that it's going in. I try and treat Year 11 as a broadening, expanding year and I try and give the kids as much influence as I can - let them experience things, as many things as I can. Then in Year 12 you can teach for the exam.*

THE NEED FOR ALTERNATIVES

The frustration that Mr P. expressed about the unsuitability of the TAE course for some students was something that the administration in the school was aware of, and planned to do something about. The Principal said:

> *If we didn't have an alternative in English, it would mean that every student would have to do TAE English. That's the situation at the moment. It's undesirable and it has been seen that we need something different. So they are looking at the General English CSE course. I'm fairly certain that, with the modifications that they have submitted, this is the one which will be accepted. If not they will run an alternative English course. It would be an experience-based course, where they would actually go out and experience things instead of just writing or reading about them.*

The principle of catering for the needs and interests of students extends to the upper school, where the timetable is usually dominated by the requirements of the Tertiary Admissions Examinations. In this school the courses and the timetable have been adapted to provide a wider range of choices for students. The Principal described the changes:

> *I think, in broad terms, the realization has been around for a long time that university-dominated courses haven't been in the best interests of all the students we sent to school. The increasing percentage of students who come back and who do not have any inclination to pursue tertiary education at all, but who want something more than an Achievement Certificate - they have the right to expect it and to get it. We run a wide range of options and have included 'reading for pleasure' and 'reading' itself in the list. We have quite a good intake among the Year 11s for the 'reading for pleasure' bit.*

The administration encourages any staff initiatives that could better meet the needs of the students. This is evident in proposals from staff for new courses and options in upper school.

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH

All the students interviewed in Years 11 and 12 (they were volunteers) were highly articulate, and had strongly developed ideas about their experiences in English and English literature. The students from English classes agreed that a major problem lay in defining the nature of English, and what it should be about, although they all agreed on the importance of English. Year 11 students said:

Bruce:	*I think English is just a matter of learning to observe and look around - just bringing what you've got and learning to be more of a person.*
Joanne:	*I think it should be a way of expressing yourself clearly, so that everybody can understand. Not so much descriptive, so you have got bogged down in real descriptive adjectives and that type of thing; but we should be learning how to really put across feelings simply, so that everybody can understand it. We should be aiming at really expressing ourselves easily, without...*
Mark:	*I think we should take English very seriously. I think it is the most important subject at high school. It should be taken very seriously because it affects your way of life later on in life.*

The students recognized the difficulty of catering for the individual

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differences and interests, although that was what they seemed to want.

Joanne: *That's the problem with English. Maths is set and that's all there is to it, but English is different. There are so many things which you can do and so many different opinions, different levels of students. It's hard to get something that everybody will enjoy.*

Interviewer: *Perhaps there would be some way of negotiating- having a sort of contract or something, where part of the responsibility was for you to say what work you wanted to do.*

Bruce: *That would be fine for the students that would do it - the ones that were willing to get out and do things. But the people who are just willing to sit back and do nothing, it won't do anything for them.*

These students also found a conflict between study about language, the demands of the exam, and things that they like to do:

Interviewer: *You spend a period a week on Wheeler and Walshe (language study exercises), don't you? Is that a good thing?*

Bruce: *I don't think it's particularly important, because who wants to know the difference between a noun and a verb? I can't see that you really use it in English anywhere.*

Joanne: *The problem is in English that there is a sort of a line that borders things like discussions and vocab, which we like doing. And then there's another line which is for stuff that is examinable. Like sitting down and writing an essay for forty minutes, which we are going to get in an exam, but on a larger scale. Things like verbs and nouns - we do things like that, which no one likes, but they are the things we are going to end up being examined on. Whether we can sit and hold a discussion for an hour isn't going to help us much in our TAE.*

Interviewer: *Do you think it helps you in the way of getting ideas that you might use in the exam?*

Joanne: *That way it does, but the thing is that we seem to spend a lot of time on discussions and that type of thing. Although they are important, they're not the kind of thing we're going to have to do in an exam.*

Two Year 12 students interviewed found the relationship between use of language and study about language a problem in English as well:

Michael: *I remember when I was in primary school we had a system where you would be given the subject to write on. Then you would have a different section, like grammar, the rights and wrongs of verbs and all those things. That started about Grade 5, when we were doing all the grammar, but I just sort of left it behind; I never really learnt it. Even now I don't know the difference between a noun and an adverb. But I've found that it hasn't affected me. I've*

	always achieved good marks in my essay writing. It's such a small part of the course now, the actual grammar, and it has never really affected me in my writing.
Anne:	*My English has been constricted, because my primary school grammar wasn't carried on to lower school. The grammar we did at primary school was cut off when we went to high school. I found that English is constricted because I find it hard to write.*

Michael rejected the idea that learning about language would improve his writing, but conceded that for some people there might be value in knowing about language *per se.*

Michael:	*I think there is a need for it, to involve the student of the English language in how it's originated and where it is going. But I don't think there's a great need for it to help the student in creative writing.*
Interviewer:	*You speak from experience, don't you?*
Michael:	*Yes. We did that last year and I never got a book until nine months through the year. I think the teacher looked upon it as something you had to do - just sort of part of the curriculum which had to be done. It was marked and you were either right or wrong. Even that didn't affect your reports; your mark that appeared on your report was your creative writing - how well you had written your essays. That part of it was just a measure of attitude and working ability.*

In endeavouring to define what the real content of English might be, Michael said:

> *Splitting it into two parts, there is creative writing, which would be imaginary, or things you actually encounter. Or else you could be writing a review or ... a bit of journalese. There are two categories and the stuff I've been writing lately is commenting on things around me, things that affect me, how I feel about them. But it's not the teacher's role to mark you on your views; it's his role to mark you on how well your view is written. If you can put forward a view that is valid and argue it well and write well, there is no way you can be marked down. There's no right answer or wrong answer.*

The students seemed to have considerable awareness of the part that language played in all aspects of the curriculum, and felt that there should be greater attention to the use of language in all subjects.

Joanne:	*I think it should be taken into more subjects too, especially in lower school, where English is English, and not social studies. And you can make all the grammatical errors you want to and no one is going to pick you up on them.*
Bruce:	*All you had to do was just write any old how. You hand it in and the teacher would mark it on not how it was written but what was written. Also I think how it is written should also come into consideration when marking.*

Mark: *Say with mathematics, when we had to write a diary. In mathematics we had to write something in diary form and everyone didn't know what he was on about, because they were so used to writing in numerals... The thing was they just couldn't be bothered and they didn't know what the teacher was on about... It was an attempt at interaction between maths and English. We were supposed to write a maths diary and hand it in to our English teacher.*

Joanne: *That was the first attempt to get everything together. I think there was a big drop in English, in the level of English. So they brought out a journal-type thing. We were all given an exercise book and we were supposed to write every day from each class in English, express it as good as we could, simply as we could...*
There was a big confusion around and no one knew what they were supposed to do. It was an attempt at interaction, but I don't think myself that the teachers got together enough and discussed it out among themselves as to how to get it going properly...

Bruce: *They thought it was more important to do their science, instead of taking out five minutes every period to write something for English. They said in science you do science, in English you do English.*

Although most of the students interviewed dismissed study about language as not being useful, they put a high value on a wide vocabulary as a means of improving their expression.

Mark: *I think vocabulary is very useful, because it's helpful... to impress people with the great words such as 'emancipation' ... and stuff. It does help to impress people. Also it helps to develop your character. That's why I said English is very important. I think vocabulary is one of the most important.*

Interviewer: *What does it do for your character?*

Mark: *It's a way of impressing people, I think.*

Interviewer: *You mean it makes you feel more confident?*

Mark: *Yes.*

Bruce: *I think it also makes it more detailed by focusing. Joanne's a girl. Well, obviously ... but if I used nice, descriptive words to describe her, they will get a picture in their heads and they'll know what I'm talking about. In that way vocabulary is very important.*

Joanne, however, found that an over-emphasis on vocabulary seemed to inhibit her writing:

> *I think it's important to be able to look at something and put it down on paper and for someone else to be able to come along and*

> *pick it up and know what you're talking about. I seemed to get bogged down once I start writing descriptively, trying to write sort of great long adjectives and trying to make it as flowery as possible. To some extent I don't think it is necessary. It is more important to get the ideas across simply, as exact as you possibly do it...*

The conflict between personal writing and writing for the teacher emerged as a considerable problem for the upper school students.

Anne: *... If you're an analyser of people and if you have a paragraph, you're not sure if you are writing down what the teacher wants you to write down.*

Michael: *But I feel in upper school the teacher's duty is to more or less coach you to develop what you already have, because to me English is an art. You're either good at it, or you're not. Nobody can really tell you how to write, how many adjectives to put in your writing to make it better. I think that at about this stage you have either developed a style or you haven't. And you go from there. They have to get us out of the embryonic stage from lower school, where we've been given a few answers. We have to go our own way now, write what we think and write how well we should be writing.*

Anne: *Michael does that very well, but I haven't the confidence doing that. I like to know what I'm doing and what I'm supposed to be putting down and like a definite answer.*

Michael: *It's sort of coming from the heart, like you're putting on canvas how you feel. Two bits of English can differ greatly just from time. This week might be full of aggression. Last week - it's artistic, it's soulful and you can put down on paper what you really feel about and what you want to say. Even if it's creative, the way you write is reflecting how you think and how you feel. That's how I feel. I can look at stuff I've written and think to myself what I was thinking then, even if it was a bit of literature analysing a poem. I can look at it and say to myself, that's what I was thinking at that time - that's how I was feeling then - just by the style of the writing.*

For the Year 11 students, the main area of dissatisfaction seemed to be the constraints of them. Asked what they enjoyed most, Bruce said:

> *The easy bits. Discussions and creative writing that is free to write what you want to write, and is not bogged down in a set time and a set topic - where you can write as much as you want and on what you want. So you can write thirty pages on torture or something.*

Interviewer: *How much time do you reckon you get to do that kind of imaginative writing, in comparison with ...?*

Bruce: *Very little, because all of our essays now are hand-them-in-at-the-end-of-the-period-type ones. Only one or two can ... You go home and, say, over the holidays you can write a big essay, have it in your file and when you're given forty, eighty minutes, whatever, to write, start another essay - just start it and, at the end of the period pull out the one you've already finished and hand it in. That's where you can sit down to one for the day, or come back later and just do it as you feel like doing it. Then you can just take the next one home and do that one. Other than that you can't see any way of cheating.*

Joanne: *Most of the time I write the essay and leave a few lines at the beginning and then come back and write down the steps I took. That's my plan. You're given eighty minutes to try and cram in as much as you can. The problem I always find is that I never seem to finish an essay. It's always left unfinished, which is terrible when you hand in something. But it's the only way I can ...*

Bruce: *It always seems to be at an exciting point, just as you're coming to an interesting climax and you want a big finale and the teacher says right you've got five minutes to finish your essay and just get it in. So you have to end it up on a really anti-climax type of thing.*

These students also expressed frustration about the amount of time that they spent on comprehension.

Interviewer: *What's the comprehension good for?*

Mark: *It keeps the class under control for forty minutes. Well I don't think comprehension is good at all. I think it's silly and boring.*

Interviewer: *Perhaps it's for your exam?*

Joanne: *They should change the exam then and chuck it out.*

Bruce: *They should have things that are good - things that are useful.*

Ma[illegible] *That's one thing I don't like with Mrs S., that's the comprehension. She does like it and is inclined to give it in class a lot, especially as a punishment if you don't hand your essay in. It's always a comprehension and ... oh, it's really boring ...*

Joanne: *We do a little bit of style work, where we're given a passage. It could be a comprehension passage and we're just told to write about the style - not really anything with the author's ideas; just the style of that particular passage. I enjoy that much more than comprehension. I'd much rather analyse a passage, or just write an opinion on a passage than sit there and answer questions. If I can read something and understand it, I just hate to have to sit there writing* *down the obvious answers. I don't mind giving my opinions on it, but I don't like answering little questions about it.*

Bruce: *Things that are so obvious, like 'Why were they sitting around the table?' 'They were having Christmas dinner.' Questions like that we have in comprehension, even in 'Mastering English' - such obvious answers and that which you can just write down. Such stupid questions.*

Joanne: *We did a lot of that in lower school too. Then you get to upper school and you get comprehension again!*

The students were very positive about the value of talking for learning, although they felt that some students were disadvantaged in open class discussion.

Joanne: *It helps a lot. I think you should be able to express yourself verbally. But in most class discussions you'll find you get two or three in the class who will contribute and then it will just stop ... Especially in our class. You find that the kids have got things to say, but they feel inhibited about saying them, or they don't want to or don't know how to put it across. I think it's more that they just don't want to.*

Bruce: *Because they might get jumped on by people. The people that don't normally get out and express themselves - everyone knows that they don't ... If you do, you get scared and they say, 'He's never done that before.' They will treat it as something unusual and they will have a bit of a stir about it and it could make them withdraw into themselves. In our class (it's a big class, with 28 people) we could have eight or nine people that discuss it all about amongst themselves and all the rest just sit and listen. They might learn something, but the ones that do the most learning are those that already know the most and who can discuss it out. So discussions help those that know how to express themselves, but don't help those who can't and they're the ones that really need the help.*

In response to a question about the degree of friction or intimidation during class discussion, the students said:

Bruce: *There isn't that much friction in our class, especially for a very big class. It's very evenly matched as far as ability to discuss, because even the people that go around and talk a lot talk to people that don't talk much and they'll get them in a two-man discussion.*

Interviewer: *Do you think they would find it easier if they had small groups instead of a bigger class?*

Joanne: *I think they'd find it easier than with loud-mouths like me. I think I scare kids off because I shout them down a bit. I think that kids who aren't quite used to talking won't talk because they know Joanne is going to come and yell at them if they say something.*

Bruce: *If there's someone better at arguing with them like, say, someone like myself or Mark or Joanne, who has an argument or just a discussion with someone else, they may be in the right and we may know they're in the right; but because we have superior ability to put forward our arguments, we can just drown them out and know they are right. And they know they're right and it frustrates them because they just can't express themselves enough to beat someone who they know is obviously wrong.*

Joanne: *Once four or five small groups start talking at once, that's a lot of talking and you can't be disruptive. But I think they work better, especially if the teacher is not around. You can then prompt kids to say something and they might. But in a class, they have to say it in front of the whole class.*

Two of the Year 12 students presented a slightly different opinion of the relationship between talk and writing:

Anne: *I use very simple words when I write and I think this reflects on the fact that I haven't used words in lower school because I've missed school and I haven't had the practice of writing with coloured words. I use very, very simple words when I write. I find it a lot easier to speak than to write. I talk to myself when I write, before I write, because I find it a lot easier to talk than to write, so I talk into a tape recorder before I write. I find that I can then colour the words, once I've spoken - once I've put down what I wanted. I write an essay about three times, usually, but it still doesn't come out the way they want it to come out. It's still very simple, plain language and I find I can't write as much as other people can write.*

Interviewer: *So one of the best ways of getting more words into your active vocabulary is to engage in conversations.*

Michael: *That's what I think. And also I think it's a small part of actually knowing what to write - what sort of words you use.*

Anne: *I find that a large part, because I don't know what words to use.*

Michael: *It's from my environment at home - having conversations with my parents. My mother, she's extremely intelligent. It's just the way I've been brought up. We used to watch the academic channel on television. Nobody else did and I felt like a bit of an outcast. But I was glad I did, because you pick up these little bits of information.*

Anne: *But my parents are completely different. My father is an accountant. He's very straightforward, very to the point, and doesn't use many coloured words.*

Interviewer: *I think you want to be careful about thinking that all the words you use need to be complex or coloured words.*

Anne: *Yes, but I find I don't use enough.*

UPPER-SCHOOL LITERATURE

One group of students taking English literature was interviewed. In an attempt to sort out the difference between upper school English and English literature, Kate and David said:

David: *Literature is a lot of morals and mainly discussing books and everything else - poems and authors - but English is just grammatical mainly and discussions of various issues around the community. There's nothing like that in English literature.*

Kate: *You go much deeper in literature because there is more time. Say, if you read a poem in English you may spend one period on it, whereas in literature you would spend a lot more time and go into different things, because everybody there has a really good understanding in English; but in an English class it's just straight and not everybody can pick up and understand things, so the teacher can't afford for half a dozen kids that could do literature as well, who are on the ball and can pick up and have a reasonable vocabulary and stuff like that.*

David: *Everybody in the school has to do English whether they like it or not. The people that do literature volunteered for it, so everybody co-operates. So it's because we have co-operation that we get anywhere at all really, because there's a lot of mucking around when it comes down to things like plays and so on in English.*

When asked why he had chosen to study English literature, David said:

> *I had this phobia from primary school about English; until Third or Fourth Year I hated it. Then, all of a sudden it came good and was enjoyable. Why? I think it's because it was very restricted before - learning all grammar - and that's what I didn't like at all. Now we have grammar and it is reasonable because you get only a small bit. Then you learn things easier; you understand things more because you start to sort yourself out. But I think that primary school and up to Second and Third Year English is way out. That would put you off doing English for sure, if it wasn't for Third Year, because I would have dropped English and done English literature alone; at least I knew it was different. It might have been a teacher, or a change from the course. We studied some books and we talked about things which were happening in the community and we didn't necessarily worry about whether you spelt right, whether you wrote right, whether you did this or that right. There were other things which interested us and not just things which interested the teacher and it was good.*

Asked what he wanted to get out of studying literature, David went on to say:

> *I want to learn primarily about everything that is going on around. I'd like to learn about the people who write the books, why and what the books are. But there are a lot of things that bug you - I don't know quite how to say it. We spend a lot of time, five periods a week, and I don't really know what I read in those periods, but I must learn something. I know a little bit about William Shakespeare, that he wrote here and acted there, but that's about really all. I suppose after two years you build up something considerably, but at the moment I can't see much that I've learned very much.*

Kate and David both found the extra freedom and responsibility for their own learning in upper school a problem.

David: *Here literature is discussion. You come in; he'll give a discussion for ten minutes and then you all sit down and write or do certain work. It's all very loose and it's everybody trying to work it out for themselves. It's a different type of teaching altogether from everything else, where they reckon you learn only by doing it - you learn by teaching yourself.*

Kate: *Yes, it is, because you're conformed and you're taught, not so much that there's right and wrong, but there is a standard and you have to get to that standard; whereas in literature there's no standard and you can think what you like. Coming from lower school to upper school also you don't have to work; you can tell the teacher to shut up if you really want to. It is really loose and you can think really what you like.*

David: *We have to have some sort of discipline anyway. That's why I think most people stay here in the first place. You get one or two teachers who always discipline you anyhow and you get one or two who deviate completely. They must tell you where you're meant to be going and you just find it yourself. It's very liberal, where you can work out what you want to do yourself; you don't have to conform and it's much different from lower school. That's why I enjoy it so much. Lower school and primary school are practically the same; they force you to do this, they force you to do that. Now it's your decision, basically what you want to do yourself.*

Part of the concern expressed by these students seemed to be related to the external exam.

Kate: *I dislike the attitude that - I know that I'm here to learn and to be educated. No, that's wrong. I know that I'm not here primarily to pass my exam, but really I am and you will always remember that. Mr D. doesn't put marks on your work and so you don't know really how you're going. You can compare my comment to somebody else's comment and they can get a three and you just wonder where the... That's what worries me - that I might not pass the exam because we talk. We don't write; we never get any practice of writing anything down.*

David: *We haven't got any concrete base. If we could do these two years once and not lose a certain percentage of marks, which you lose if you repeat subjects. And if you could get through the two years and come back and do it, you know all about it, you have a concrete base to work on. But you're working in thin air at the moment and that's what worries me.*

Given these reservations, the students were asked what they thought they had gained from the literature course.

Kate: *I'm learning to be more tolerant and to accept things - to be able to give my feelings, be able to set things out before I say them. I've learned a lot but I haven't learned anything. I always used to say that Shakespeare was just down the drain. A fortnight ago we did 'Othello' and we did it on a record. I enjoyed that so much and it just made me feel all good. I said, 'I'm glad I don't drop it because I liked it.' And that's the sort of thing I'm learning. I'm learning to like lots of things like that.*

David: *I look at books much differently now. Where before I'd look at a book once and say I had read it, forget the author, forget the title and I wouldn't be able to refer back to it. In eight months we've read a couple of books for set courses, as well as for English, and because of that I've read extra books which aren't just sort of fairy stories just to read for the sake of reading, and I can remember names of the authors, quotes from the books. Before, I couldn't do that; I had a hopeless memory and now it fascinates me that I can; it's really good. It stimulated me, or stirred up something which I never knew I had. I don't know, it's just come.*

LOWER-SCHOOL ENGLISH

In the lower school, interviews were confined to Year 8 students in an attempt to identify changes from primary to secondary school. One point which emerged quite strongly was that the students' experiences and perceptions about English varied markedly depending on which primary schools they came from. For example, one group of Year 8 students said:

Boy 1: *At primary school we mainly wrote stories for English. We used to learn more about commas, full stops and things like that.*

Karen: *Yes, last year we only learnt how to spell words and that, but this year we're getting further in our writing. We learn to make proper sentences and write paragraphs.*

Interviewer: *Are you from the same primary school, or different ones?*

Boys: *No.*

Girls: *We are.*

Interviewer: *The two girls are from the same school and the two boys from different ones? So you think that the primary schools are different themselves? It sounded a bit from what Karen said that they were. She didn't say anything about writing stories; she said about learning to spell.*

Karen: *We did write stories.*

Interviewer: *You did write stories? Did you do any drama like you did this morning - story dramas?*

Karen: *Not often.*

Boys: *We did. We used to do a drama or play once a week.*

Interviewer: *Did you do it from a favourite text, or did you make up plays like you did this morning?*

Boys: *We made up plays.*

Interviewer: *And did you write stories?*

Linda: *We wrote quite a few stories - about two a week, wasn't it. Even more sometimes.*

Interviewer: *Did the boys from their schools write stories too?*

David: *Yes, we used to have, like, contests. Like, you'd have the real brains - say, the kids that weren't too smart, they would only expect about a page and the real brains about three pages.*

When asked about opportunities for talk and for reading, this group again gave widely varying answers.

Interviewer: *What about becoming more proficient in talk? In other words, express yourselves in order to talk to people - to talk about all sorts of things?*

Stephen: *We used to have news... like we do now and speak about them.*

Karen: *One exercise that we had last year was having partners or groups and discussing things together and talking. We did that quite often.*

Linda: *We used to have debates on uranium - whether we should export it or not. There was one of the best types of transport - better than nowadays cars and that. Yes, that's what we did.*

Interviewer: *You seemed to have covered a broad area of primary school education. What about reading?*

Stephen: *We didn't do any last year.*

Interviewer: *What do you mean you didn't do any last year?*

David: *We only did plays.*

Stephen: *Instead of reading we did a lot of singing instead.*

David: *We went down to the library twice a week for reading and English and we had about an hour for reading. We used to read a lot.*

Interviewer: *That's good. I didn't mean reading courses, you know. I meant reading books.*

Karen: *When we had to do assignments we had to read.*

Boys: *We read one novel and that's it.*
We used to have reading periods.

Linda: *We read a novel - I don't know who by, but it was a fairly thick book. It was terrible, that story - I can't remember what it was called now - about Christmas.*

Interviewer: *So you got some books that you were assigned to read and others you read yourself away.*

Karen: *Rotten magazines anyway.*

Linda: *Yes, those awful 'School Papers'.*

Another group of Year 8 students sorted out the difference between primary and secondary school this way:

Interviewer: *What new things do you think you've learnt in the last eight months or so since you came to high school?*

Bevan: *A different course of English. It's not so much that I've learnt to describe and be more creative when I write, because English has got some way. Back at when I was in primary we used to get adverbs and verbs and all this counted into our heads, and here it's leisurely put into your head and you remember it more, I'd say, and I learn in English more than I did back at primary.*

Peter: *Well, uh... there is more fun in English at high school with the classes that we've got, because -umm-it's more a fun way of doing it and it's not like every time you come into a class - you always put your head down into a book; you just write until the class is over. But the English that we've got, it's more exciting.*

David: *Umm, yeh, I agree with Peter, umm... We do things different than in primary school. Like in primary school you used to just sit down and write a story and, like, yesterday we did that animals' day and people get up and speak about their animal, and today - drama. We do things in front of other people; it gives you more confidence.*

In response to an open invitation of the end of the interview to say anything they hadn't been given opportunity to mention, the students said:

Peter: *Well, before when I used to go to primary I used to think... 'Oh, God, another hard day, real hard day ahead of me'; but since I've come to this school the work has become real easy, or more-less-easy, but up to the school standards.*

Interviewer: *Why is it that easy? What's different?*

Peter: *Oh, the method of teaching.*

Bevan: *Yeh, I think, one thing I think is good in high school is that you've got a different teacher for different subjects and what helps a lot is that there might be a teacher that you don't like and you think, 'Oh, I don't want to come to school for one more day, next week and all year'. But I think it's good to have a different teacher for a different subject.*

Peter: *Another thing is, if I've got problems I go and see a teacher - probably more than I would tell my mother and father.*

Some of the students in the first group found the transition to secondary school more painful at first.

Interviewer: *Now, let's come on to what goes on here. How different does it seem, apart from the fact that teachers are always different?*

Karen: *Well, first of all you have the dividing of your classes. Last year you were in the one class and not moving to any other classes, except you could go to the library, or outside somewhere. At high school now, you start off in the morning with, say... This morning we had two periods of social studies and then we went on to another room. And it goes on for a week like that.*

Interviewer: *Shifting around all the time. How do you find that - disturbing?*

Linda: *Terrible.*

Karen: *For the first day Linda and I were criticising all the time because of all these stairs.*

Boy 1: *I think it is better, because you get sick of the same old teacher all the time and I like a change.*

This group also thought that English in secondary school was an improvement on their primary school experience.

Interviewer: *What's so good about the English you do with Mr D.?*

Karen: *Well, you don't sit down and write all the time. You learn exercises and memorize them. Occasionally we write, say, once or twice a week at the most. If we don't do that we do drama, playing games like we had today, like lucky dip and that.*

Linda: *Then we had speeches. We had to make speeches.*

David: *Some days he'd really get you working, doing all... He'd tell you about books. And about every month he gives you a book that you've got to read. If you don't want to read them you don't read them, but just about all the kids read them.*

Stephen: *And we're always having assignments.*

Together: *Yes, we've had some great assignments.*

Linda: *You had to write about yourself, a whole life story about yourself. And over the May holidays we had one.*

Stephen: *We had to write one about a voyage, when we had to go, we had to plan it out, how much money we would spend and what food would you need.*

These students also seem to share each other's writing a great deal.

Interviewer: *Do you ever have to read each other's?*

Linda: *Me, Karen and Andrea always sit together and we always read each other's, and picked out and discuss.*

Interviewer: *I was going to ask you whether you get help in your work from anybody other than the teacher? Do you have help from your parents or other students?*

David: *Yes, we have arguments which is the right one. We go and ask the teacher in the end.*

Stephen: *Mr D. tells us to do it ourself - tells us to give it to the other kids to mark.*

Interviewer: *What do you think is the value of your reading each other's work and attempting to mark it?*

Stephen: *You can't cheat; you don't cheat yourself.*

Linda: *You find out what's written on their paper.*

David: *You get different ideas. Like you've got a good idea, but the other one is better. You put them together and it's better.*

The other group of Year 8 students expressed quite firm ideas about what they thought they gained from their English lessons. They began by discussing a lesson where some students had brought their pets to talk about for National Animals' Day.

Interviewer: *In that lesson I think only three people, apart from Mrs S., actually got to talk about their animals or photographs, and so on. Did it help the others who didn't get an opportunity to talk to the whole class?*

Peter: *Well, I think it encouraged other people, so if it ever happens again or through life that it may aid them.*

Interviewer: *Bevan, you were one of the people who was going to speak just at the end of the lesson. What do you think?*

Bevan: *Umm... well, I think it just helps you to be able to stand up and talk about something that you want to talk about. You know, people didn't know - only those three people knew that it was going to happen that day. Our form teacher forgot to tell us. I think it just helps you to get up and talk to people.*

Interviewer: *Is it easier to talk about things or to write about things that you are interested in than other topics?*

Bevan: *Yeh, I find it far easier to talk on, write and explain things that I know and have experienced and have heard about or read than something that you are making up out of your mind and you don't know anything about.*

Peter: *Well, through life it may aid you because if you want to, if you have got a job like an instructor and you've - it's just the job you can only get - well, it may aid you through the schooling you've done.*

This led into a discussion about where students might get new ideas from.

Interviewer: *Well, Bevan said it's easiest to talk about things that you know and things that you have done; but we've each only done a certain amount of things, so where would the new things come from?*

David: *I think it's just when you read books you find out things, different things ... That's where I find out most of my things - new things. Well, visiting different places, speaking to different people, you find out different things.*

Bevan: *We have been out in a few of the options, and in English especially we've been out a fair bit. And in a couple of the options, we've been out, like drawing - we've gone out to draw buildings - but that's about all we've ever done outside.*

Interviewer: *When you go on excursions or even just go out to draw, do you find that they're of value?*

Peter: *Yes, because it's like a new thing - like if you've just come from primary school and just suddenly going to high school. It's just like you're learning a new thing every day.*

The students also saw a great deal of value in their drama activities.

Bevan: *Yeh, I think it does; it gives you confidence to get out in front of everybody and do the same thing they do. Everybody has to do it and it gives you more confidence, just to stand up and do things.*

David: *Yeh, it makes you aware that you've got to ... It's not always things in the classroom ... We do a lot of work, but we do it in a way that Mrs S. wants to and that's just the way we want to do it. And then she knows when we are getting worn out and she takes us outside for drama like that for a couple of days.*

Peter: *That's more or less -um - Mrs S.; she is trying to teach us. This is how I think that - umm - English is more ... of a way of life - that it's not just bookwork and studying a lot.*

Asked what they liked most about English, the students were unanimous about the pleasure and value of stories.

Interviewer: *Well, you've all said that you enjoy English more this year than perhaps you did at primary school. What are the things you enjoy most? What are the things you like to do in English?*

Bevan: *I like to write essays...*
You're given a certain time in the class to do that work, and you work at your own pace and what you like to do, and I like to write stories.

Peter: *I do like stories, but English is more or less like an option, I think. Ah, it's fun to do - you benefit from it later in life, and just that it's fun.*

David: *You do a lot of different things; it's a bit like speech and it's a bit like all the options - it helps your confidence. If you like stories it helps your grammar, and things like that ...*

Interviewer: *You spoke about the assignments and getting a certain amount of time to do them ... Do you get many choices? Are you allowed to choose what you do?*

Peter: *Oh, sometimes you are, but now and then if it's a set assignment it turns out to be fun anyway.*

David: *We've got to hand an assignment in tomorrow. That one we were given a piece of paper and it had what we were to go on a journey. But we were given a choice of what craft you used - you could have it walking, with no food, and you could have a spaceship with pills for food. If you go anywhere, you could have an imaginary map. I think you could say things that weren't true and everything ... But - but the thing had to be based on going to a journey and getting back, or something like that.*

WRITTEN OUTCOMES

In this school, there was a fairly even split between the amount of exercises and short pieces of writing, and the continuous writing. Some teachers were using the Houghton Mifflin scheme up to three periods per week, and language study books such as *Mastering English* (Wheeler and Walshe) were in common use. Most teachers were also encouraging long, more creative assignments of the kind described by David (above), where students had considerable choice of topic, and wrote for a variety of audiences and purposes.

Extracts from one of these may serve as an example of the kind of work done. A Year 10 boy chose to present the Captain's Log from a space journey.

INTRODUCTION

About 1600 years ago, man first landed on his nearest neighbour, the moon. Since that time, mankind has made incredible technological progress. He learnt how to build spacecraft to travel faster than the speed of light, he discovered hyperspace and how to use it to his advantage, and countless other discoveries, that in the 20th Century would of seemed absurb.

This is the first journey of its kind and the reason behind it is to seek out other life forms in the Milky Way, no matter how primitive, or advanced they might be. In the future we can look forward to exploring other galaxies besides our own.

Only highly qualified astronauts were selected for this mission, and we were fortunate that most of them returned safely to their home planet, Earth.

J. Hanson
Secretary for the Head of Astronauts

Details of the intended destination, the kind of craft, provisions and space suits were described in detail, together with maps and diagrams. These sections were followed by a log of the actual journey. For example:

CAPTAIN'S LOG

STAR-DATE
05:01:10600: We were transferred from NASA aeronautics centre to rendesvous with 'Enterprise' hypercraft to Space Station IV. Here we boarded 'Genesis' after three hours of medical check-up and hyperdermics. At 1300 hours Earth time 'Genesis' fired her rockets and we started our first part of the journey. We reached the moon at 1400:30 hours and commenced our orbit around the planet and were shot off into space. We switched to star drive as we passed Jupiter. The rest of the day was spent organizing the ship.

……

STAR-DATE
08:01:10607: We found another planet with advanced life form. These creatures are nothing like Earth creatures. The planet orbits around two suns, which is not common. Therefore, the animals have tough, shell-like coverings to protect them from the heat (60°C-70° constant) and no night time vision.

11:01:10607: We found advanced life form again. We must be passing through a constellation teaming with life. This time it was on two planets orbitting the same sun. The creatures are of the highest form of life found so far. They are horse-like creatures, and others which are similar to African wildlife. Two of each were taken aboard ship for later breeding back on Earth.

CAPTAIN'S NOTE

I personally think the trip was worthwhile. It is a shame I cannot tell anyone else about the alien creatures. But maybe in the not too distant future they may visit us. I don't think any of things should be changed, and it would be worthwhile to undertake another such journey. Maybe if we had more time we could of studied the planets better.

Especially the primitive people we found. If I had the chance to go on another such voyage, I certainly would.

D. Wilkins
Captain of 'Genesis'

This writing was not atypical. All students in the class had produced a major creative work, ranging from the journey, to personal dossiers, imaginary dossiers, and poetry anthologies, depending on the student's preference. Generally the writing seemed of high quality and considerable personal interest.

Students also discussed their writing quite freely in informal contacts with interviewers. There were also extended comments from the teacher, responding to the quality of mind, interests and emotions which the student revealed, allowing for considerable interchange of personal opinion.

PARENTS' VIEW OF ENGLISH

Three parents working in the school canteen were captured. Dorothy, an ex-secondary school teacher; Val, a primary school teacher's aide; and Liz, who described herself as 'an ordinary mum'. The interview began with a discussion of what seems to have changed about English teaching, and focused in particular on reading.

Dorothy: *I have three boys and I sometimes think that boys expect something different from English than what girls do. When I think of what I wanted from English and what they want. They seem to be happy as long as they are able to read just what they have to read at school and no more. They don't seem to madly want to go and take up books, except the younger one and he seems to be interested in anything like that.*

Why was there this sudden break between reading the classics and giving them all this modern stuff to read? Some of it isn't that modern - like, it has been written for quite a long time - but the concepts covered seem to be different than what we did; they seem to break from tradition, you might say. I think I would really like them to read fairly widely and I would like them to read, because I believe that if you do read well and if your education hasn't been covered properly at school for various reasons, you are able to educate yourself. This is why I would like my children to have a good grasp of the English language, so that they can further their education if they so wish.

Elizabeth: *I've got three boys. The youngest one, who is still in primary, he's quite a good reader and he can write quite good essays. The second one, he was pushed too much in primary school at reading and now he really dislikes reading. His English now is passable, but he hasn't really comprehended quite the meaning of a lot of words. And writing essays, well he just is not interested, and he's certainly not interested in reading now, which really worries me. I think if they hadn't pushed him so much in the Grades 1-3 in reading (because he was very keen on it), this wouldn't be so now. I had to ask the teacher to stop, because they were pushing him so that he hated to go to school. I think now, in his second year high, if he can get away with a six-line essay type of thing, he feels it's better than writing a page. The third one, he's not extra keen on reading, but I think if they really liked they could get on much better in their English lessons, but I don't think now that they break up sentences and so forth like we used to. We had a better grounding, I think, in this regard and with that I think we've found that we had a better understanding of some of the words.*

Val: *I was thoroughly bored to tears with English when I was at school; I hated it. I have three girls, one in primary school, the other two in high school. The oldest one is an avid reader. Her English is exceptionally good. But she's also interested in it. I feel that the way they teach them these days is far more interesting than what it was when I went to school and the fact that the girl is a good reader makes her interested in it. The second one wasn't such a good reader at primary school. She wasn't forced, however, she just plodded along. She's in third year this year and has all of a sudden started to take an interest in reading. When she's not in front of the television she's in her bedroom reading. As far as essays and things go, the eldest one particularly will sit down and write, write and write. She has a vivid imagination and can comprehend anything she reads. She'll just sit there and do it. The second one, she can speak it; if you asked her what a book was all about she could tell you, but* *when it comes to putting it on paper, it's a slightly different thing. She hasn't quite got the ability to put it down on paper as much as she has actually telling you about. The younger one, she comes up to high school next year. I think she's a very good reader too and she'll probably be like the eldest one eventually, be able to write. I think that English today is far more interesting. There's a far wider range of things that they can do. We were told, like Dorothy said, you have to study the classics; you were set a curriculum and there was no choice. You only had one reading-book, which lasted you the whole year, whereas now they can read anything up to a hundred books a year if they want to.*

This led on to a discussion of the need to cater for the interests and intentions of individual children, if they were to achieve to their maximum ability.

Dorothy: *You see it depends where you want your interest to take you. My eldest boy has just finished school last year. He was never at all interested in writing the kind of things they give in compositions on, say, any subject at all. He's got a very factual mind; he hasn't got an imaginative mind at all. He found it was a crashing bore, I think, to have to make up an essay on what you would do in certain situations, because I suppose he thought 'When I get into that situation I'll solve it, but why write pages and pages on that?' I think that there should be an English course for such people who don't have a lot of imagination - who will never do well at that type of English. His worst mark was English; his best mark was maths. There was that wide gap; he got about 1 in the maths and 6 in the English, which was about as good as he ever did. It wasn't because he was stupid; it was just that he didn't like that English. If he had been taught the sort of English, like a more factual type, where you must analyse a subject, the whole sentence and say what the words do and where they should go, I think he might have been better at that type of English, but they don't do that any more. Now this is where I find, because this English isn't taught, if you want to go on and do a language at secondary school, if you haven't got the basics in English you have terrible trouble trying to master a language...*

... Well, I think there shouldn't be such a big gap between what there used to be and what there is now. There should be a bit more of the old with the new, so that any student can go out and cope with different vocations more easily, I think, if this sort of English was pursued in a wider field.

A similar point was made about individual differences with regard to discussion and oral work.

Dorothy: *My eldest son, they say, is shy; he's not really shy at all, but if anybody else wants to talk he just sits back and lets them talk. He won't say anything, unless he really feels that it needs to be said.*

Val: *This happens with my eldest daughter. The English teacher here said to us in our interview, 'I wish Denise would come out and say more, because she has the right answers to the questions, instead of some of these that get up there and talk for the sake of talking. They don't know what they're talking about; they give false answers'. If he specifically says to her, 'What do you think?' then she will tell them. I feel that if she'd had had a little more confidence given to her when she was younger, then she would be a bit more confident at it now.*

These parents seemed to perceive the purpose of oral work in terms of public performance:

Dorothy: *To me English is the most important subject in the school because, as I say, it teaches you to stand up and express yourself, as well as write it, and you can't do so unless you have the words to do it with. So it should really cover public speaking. They do do a certain amount in schools, but they used to do it in primary school, because I know the first part of the day used to be news. You would stand up and it didn't matter whether you had the news wrong or not, the main thing was that you expressed yourself.*

Val: *Well, they had to cut that daily news out, not because of bad English or that, but there was just too much of home life coming in and this was causing a great lot of embarrassment.*

Dorothy: *Yes, but you could control this by saying we'll only have news which is about people of other lands. You generally find that the teacher controls the ones who give the news and if there are any in the class that tend to do that sort of thing, bring out their personal life, they don't get the opportunity to get up and speak very often.*

Elizabeth: *They need to have had quite a sound basis of English. They have more confidence because before, if they thought themselves a bit below standard, they wouldn't get up, or even express themselves.*

Dorothy: *I think this public speaking is a very big thing. I find that my youngest daughter, who in her last three years at primary school has been given the opportunity to speak in front of the school is far more confident in speaking than the other two girls, because they haven't had the opportunities to speak in front of a crowd, where she has. I think the children at primary level, if they are given the opportunity to get up and speak, when they get to high school, they just have that little bit more* *confidence in themselves and can probably adjust to the differences that they have in moving from primary school to secondary.*

When asked whether students should become more acquainted with Australian culture, the parents said:

Elizabeth: *When you say Australian culture, what exactly do you mean? I often wonder what is Australian culture. When I was growing up I think our culture would have been more English. Where would we get the Australian culture from? Do we take it from the Aboriginals?*

Val: *I think that when they get into upper high school - but even, like, in Third Year they're allowed to pick their own author or authoress, aren't they? Like, for the different projects they might pick one particular author, try to get three or four of these books and write about them...*

Dorothy: *They can select any author they like. Last year one of my boys selected an American. This year I suggested we take an Australian...*

... I did this for two reasons - because I actually knew her son and I knew a bit about her personal background and I read one of her books which has been serialized; and I think she writes very close to what is to me the real Australia as the white people know it. It wouldn't be as the black people know it. I would say that we have two Australian cultures, because we would have it as the whites know it and the other as the blacks know it. At some time or other somewhere along the line the two will probably blend. They're probably blending now...

Val: *I think we should start by bringing the Australian writers and that into the schools to get their concept of things - what they think - instead of looking overseas all the time.*

Elizabeth: *It's difficult to say. I think the children of today are subjected to more Australian literature, history than what we were. We were very strongly English. I think they should be taught more of what the Australian writers are writing.*

Dorothy: *I think they are encouraged to come into schools more. Any Australian who is a bit well known comes into schools. I think that Australian writers are being encouraged a lot more. You know down at the Fremantle Arts Centre, they get quite a lot there in the poetry line.*

This led to a discussion about the value of excursions. The parents seemed ambivalent about excursions, and more inclined to favour visitors coming into the school.

Val: *Sometimes I think that some of these excursions for English and so forth are a bit beyond my comprehension. I can't specifically name one now, but when they have done it and come home and say 'Oh, that's an English excursion', I can't see the connection.*

Dorothy: *I think that before they do anything like that, if you actually brought in one of the men who writes poetry, say - if they come in and got to talk about their experiences about how they came to write poetry and what it means to them. I know one fellow who is an electrician - so just come in that role and just see what difference it has made in his life, having this extension of himself into another world outside his everyday trade. I think this angle is one that has to be shown to children, not just English as a subject, but English as something which, in your later life, is going to make life a lot more interesting, because you never know just what lies ahead of you... I think English should be presented in this light, where you don't know what is actually there for you.*

Elizabeth: *Possible with some of the excursions. Some of the children think it's a good idea so that they can get out of school. They say, 'Mum can we have a 50 cents? We're going off to see so-and-so,' and when they come home I say, 'What did you see?' They say, 'I don't know. There was something there, but we got out of going to school for today...' A lot of these plays that they're doing now in the National Theatre Trust, where they come into the schools and presenting these plays in the classroom and involving the children in them - I think these are far more of benefit to the children than going out on an excursion.*

Dorothy: *I think too with anyone coming into the school, that a little bit of preparation is necessary prior to their coming, so that they know a little bit of what to expect and what they should to learn, or to get from that situation. It's the same as when you're going on something yourself. If you get a little preparatory work done, you get a lot more from it.*

Val: *It's the same with going to see plays. I think when the children were taken to some of these plays, as Dorothy said, if they were prepared beforehand and read the story before they went, they would probably get far more out of it than what they would if they go along and they come home and you expect them to write a story.*

The parents then went on to discuss the value of school dramatic productions.

Dorothy: *But strangely enough, if you want them to get the most benefit from plays is if the school puts on a play and they actually know the people in it. Then* *they really feel part of it. I know when they had 'Charley's Aunt' they were so excited. He actually knew all the words; he knew what was going on and he really felt that he had been a part of preparing that, although he wasn't actually in it. I'm quite sure that for the rest of his life 'Charley's Aunt' will always be a play he will remember.*

Val: *I think they should do more of that. I went along to see 'Charley's Aunt' and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I didn't know very much about the story before I went. As far as the play went we thoroughly enjoyed it. The two older girls got a terrific amount out of it, because they knew all the people in it. I only wish they could do more of this sort of thing.*

Dorothy: *You do learn better by being thoroughly involved in something like that.*

Val: *The teachers could be encouraged too to do more of that sort of thing - to involve the children. And they would get a lot out of it themselves, because I'm sure that Mr X had a terrific pride in what he did; he must have got a lot out of it himself... The kids running riot around the place and he must have had the thought in his mind, 'Oh, it's not worth it'. But at the final night I'm sure he felt it was all worth it.*

Dorothy: *I do think too, that by bringing acting into English, that it often gets the chance for a child to show that he has a talent, which he wouldn't be able to express otherwise. So I do think that this type of an English lesson has its value there. Quite often you'll find that maybe the duffer in class is the best one at that particular play and this builds up a child in a way that can make so much difference to their lives. So by bringing in as many different angles of an English lesson as possible it means that you possibly will get more from every child.*

The parents were also asked to describe any ways in which they actively encouraged their children's development in English out of school time. Their answers focused strongly on encouraging their children to read.

Elizabeth: *The one that I spoke about that has a great dislike for reading, he really enjoys reading the newspaper - the back pages, the sporting section - because he's sport-minded...*

I think that if he won't read a book he can pick up things in the newspaper. Only the other day he said, 'This is bad English, isn't it?' He read it out to me and said, 'Oh no, it isn't; it was me that was reading it wrong'. I thought that by allowing him to do that and not making *him read a book, it will encourage him to appreciate reading a little bit more. He will read cricket magazines and things like that.*

Val: *I find that with one, she's only just developing into wanting to read actual books, but she's a pop magazine fan. This is why I don't begrudge her to read. At least she's reading something. It might not be necessarily the best written English, but if it's in a magazine it must be fairly well written. But the other two, they will read; but then, as I said, they're avid readers anyway.*

Dorothy: *I have a lot of books. To me books are very important. To me it's almost sacrilegious to destroy a book, unless it's rubbish, which I consider they will not profit at all from. In such cases we'll discuss it for a while and I will say, 'Put it in the rubbish bin. There are some books which are not worth keeping'. I never bought any comics, because I don't think they're well presented on the whole. Your eyes jump everywhere. If they want to buy them themselves they can, but I've never been terribly lavish in handing out pocket money, so they've learned not to buy comics.*

They can read the newspapers. There is a lot in the newspapers that isn't worth reading, but they have got to learn to evaluate this for themselves. I've always encouraged them to discuss whatever they read and so you get the odd question, 'What is rape?' I think you have to know the answer to this. You will find that in answering, talking and discussing with children that they are very realistic. Most of them haven't got their minds polluted with too many overshades or undershades.

They get so much literature at the school these days that I've actually learned from the literature they have brought home. It is well-presented stuff, I think. So I say the main thing is to put plenty of literature.

I think the schools are doing a good job as far as they are going, but I still think that they need to bring in a bit more of the old.

CASE STUDY 6—METROPOLITAN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

REASONS FOR SELECTION

We accepted this school's offer to be a case study because it was on the outer fringes of metropolitan Perth, because it was a 'faculty' school, and because it had begun to offer places in TAE classes to adults in the local community.

THE SCHOOL AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

There are some 1300 students on roll. The English department numbers twelve teachers, ten of whom are full time in English. There are two small English staff-rooms and although it is designed as a 'faculty' school about half the classes are peripatetic. There is a wide range of views about English teaching: within the general framework of the curriculum, staff are free to follow their own priorities.

We found when we got into the school that our expectations had to be sharply modified. There was far more going on relative to the community than the joint adult-school student classes. It was, in fact, the Principal's declared aim to make it a 'community school' in every possible sense of the phrase.

SCHOOL POLICY AND ITS EFFECT ON THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

To quote from the Principal's annual report for 1978:

> *The school's policy is to aim at the full implementation of the K-12 concept and the eventual establishment of a true community school operating from pre-school through to further education.*

It is this policy and its effect on the work in English that we focus on in this case study. We looked chiefly at four aspects:

- Making a community school a reality.
- Making appropriate education for *all* students a reality.
- The effects of community orientation on English.
- Staff communication and teacher development.

MAKING A COMMUNITY SCHOOL A REALITY

The Principal had a clear view of education not as a preparation for life but as a life-long process. It followed, therefore, that the school had a much more than casual relationship with the community. In interview, the Principal said:

> *Education is a continuum; it's concerned with all the aspirations of people at whatever age and in the provision of programmes that can help them realize those aspirations. The overall aim is for us to be a community school which will incorporate all the levels of schooling - pre-school primary, and secondary - in an integrated form so that the child starts at the school when he may be three or four years old, and at the other end, some sort of occupations are open to him even up to the time of post-retirement. To that end, of course, mature age programmes are of great assistance. We hope to develop the concept of an extended time-table, which in effect makes the school operational from 8.30 a.m. till 10.00 p.m. and,*

> *in areas where relevant, throughout the weekend.*

He spoke with some asperity about people who lost interest in education as soon as their students turned 12 or 18.

> *Take yourself and me: later on in life we develop interests we want to satisfy. The school is the obvious place to do that. As housewives, you get fed up with little kids hanging round your apron-strings all day and every day, a sort of sterile kitchen-based existence. If those people can come and do some things they didn't do at school and have their kids looked after professionally at the same time (there is a creche planned for the children of mature students) you have contented and fulfilled people.*

Deliberate organizational steps have been taken to make these aims a reality.

> *We have, for a start, the School Council, which is involved in practically every area of the operation of the school. We've got them (standing committees) in education, finance, grounds and buildings, canteen agriculture - almost every area of the school has its relevant committee which keeps an eye on what's going on, best ways of doing it, etc. And the Council has administration staff, and student and community representation.*

Membership of the Council is open to any citizens who are interested and there are student and staff representatives with voting rights on all the committees. Thus parents and citizens, as well as working in classes with students, meet them in a practical working capacity on these committees.

Secondly, the school buildings and resources have been made available from 8.30 a.m. to 10.00 p.m. each weekday and at the week-ends for the library, for sporting activities and community use of the building. 'The gym, for example, is used for all kinds of things: gym classes, soccer training, ballet endlessly, bands who want to practise.' (Upper school year mistress and part-time technical officer.)

So the problems of the cleaners has been solved in this school. No 'dead plant' from 3.30 onwards, as was the case in many schools we visited.

Thirdly, there is the practical co-operation with primary schools in an attempt to create greater continuity. All Year 7 children spend three days in the high school. Their teachers come too. To quote again from the Principal's report:

> *There is a structured programme of visits throughout the year by secondary staff members to contributory primary schools, and vice-versa. This programme is re-inforced by the orientation week in November, during which all Year 7 classes and their teachers attend the high school (some 340 children) and share an educational programme which includes contact with those teachers in the high school with whom they will be involved in the following year.*

So far, in developing the K-12 idea, there is a structured programme in music, and in agriculture, with the school farm as a focus running through both primary and high school.

We have not space to quote much from the many conversations we had about the steps taken to integrate the school with its local community. We illustrate in detail only from our interviews about the effects of adult students working school classes.

Adults in TAE classes

Some of the mature students work in the TAE classes and others take some of the Year 10 options such as typing, business communications, consumer education, and so on. We visited TAE classes in literature and English and interviewed teachers, school students and mature students. We asked them about the effects of this innovation on their work and on them as individuals. One thing that emerged clearly was a sharpening of the self-image of all those we talked to, and a heightened perception of the process of education.

Two interviews with English teachers taking TAE classes

Two senior teachers

Interviewer: *Tell me something about how the mature age students fit into a school which normally has a notion of a certain age group. Can you accommodate older people happily?*

Mr A.: *I find they fit remarkably well. I have four in a class of 25. You will see when you come into the class; they are just part of the class. They're not considered by the others as anything different.*

Interviewer: *Isn't it quite a big adaptation for them to make from being a mum with teenage children to being students themselves?*

Mr A.: *They seem to learn, apart from the subject they're learning, more about 15-year-olds in a crowd. It opens their eyes to the amount of work students have to do.*

Mrs B.: *And I think it helps with their own kids. It's amazing the insight one of mine now has, just by sitting back and listening to her own boy joining in.*

Interviewer: *Because it's twenty-five miles to the nearest Tech., it's a kind of geographical accident that you have these mature-age students. Do you think any case can be made for a school having mature age students anyway?*

Mr A.: *I would be all in favour of it. I think it's a marvellous thing. It makes me myself look much more closely at my behaviour and my teaching. It opens my eyes. I realize I am more - um - They can see through me far more easily than students can because they are more experienced in life.*

A young teacher in her third year of teaching

Interviewer: *Could you say what effect you find, or what difference it makes, having mature students in your English classes?*

Mrs C.: *They make the rest of the kids re-think about the kind of things they say to me... They change their attitude about smart remarks and things like that in class. You tend to lose that, and the discussions you have, because the mature-age students have got so much more experience, become much more adult... They've always been older than I am, which has been good for me because it means I'm not the smarty who's always right. It's good for the teachers, too. They definitely make you try that much harder because they will question you much more readily than kids, and the kids have picked up that attitude too...*

... The kids are amazed that people can come back to school when they are so much older, but they get used to it readily and they treat them like their people. It's 'Hey, Louise, come here, I want you to help me with this'...and they do help each other. Louise is more practical than the kids are, and whenever we do discussions everyone wants to be in her group.

... There's another student who had some bitter experience of going to work... It's quite funny because all the things you have been telling them for years, they see it in the living flesh, and they believe it and they never believed you. It makes the difference to most kids between not doing their homework and doing it.

... I think there will be more and more mature-age people coming in... It was one of the boss's ideas and it has really taken off. It has to be a good thing. Philosophically you have to be educated whenever you like. I don't think there is anyone who disagrees with it among the staff.

Interview with three Year 12 school students taking TAE English

Interviewer: *Does having mature students in your class make any difference?*

James: *I see a maturing influence, actually. With the mature-age students in there it seems to keep down a lot of the school romantics. I think we'd probably be a bit rougher and wilder if it wasn't for the mature-age students.*

Mary: *I don't think so. People still carry on as they usually do.*

James: *It depends. They don't get hit with paper plates and things though.*

Mary: *I don't know if they seem to have more personal things that they bring into class than we would, because we don't know they exist; but for them they do.*

Peter: *They know exactly what they're after - they know what they want to do...*

James: *I enjoy talking to older people, on not necessarily school-related subjects, but it's still quite an education just talking to people.*

Peter: *And they help us in various ways as well.*

James: *We're rejuvenating them, and they're maturing us!*

Two interviews with mature-age students

Mrs D. and Mrs S. are housewives with families and are in their early 40s. In reply to a question about how they come to be on the course they said:

Mrs D.: *Well, I have been married 15 years and have two children who are more or less off my hands now. I've always been interested in literature but I find reading on your own can be quite lonely if you can't sort of exchange ideas. I heard about this course and I came down here and I'm really enjoying it because it's the first time in my life that I've ever been able to discuss literature so widely as it's discussed in the classroom...*

Mrs S.: *I have been married for twenty years and I have four children, the eldest nineteen. I come from a very large family so I opted to finish my schooling in the third year of high school and train as a nurse. Now I find I have the time to do something that I find pleasure in doing. We live twenty-five miles from the city so I opted to come here as a mature-age student because it gave the classes and the times that suited me without interfering with my family and my husband. I find great enjoyment in the class.*

Interviewer: *Are you planning to take the written exam?*

Mrs S.: *Yes, we shall sit the written exam. I think it would be unfair to jeopardize the place of young people if we couldn't do a course fairly and squarely competing with them.*

Interviewer: *Do you think your presence has had any noticeable affect on the class?*

Mrs D.: *Well, I think so, because we are quite enthusiastic and I think that helps, you know.*

Interviewer: *Do you know the school students? Do you talk to them? Do they talk to you?*

Mrs S.: *Yes, you do gradually get to know them. I find them quite friendly, but we spend so little time in the school. I come every morning and I'm gone by 10.30. We don't spend a recess or any free periods here at all. I do all my assignments while my children are away at school.*

Mrs D.: *You feel nervous the first couple of times, but after a while - Everybody is here to learn, and that's the thing about coming to class.*

Hugh Davey is rising twenty, left the country at the end of Year 11, worked at a variety of jobs to save his fare back; then worked again in Australia to save money to put himself through school (five TAE subjects) with a view to tertiary admission.

Interviewer: *Do you find it different coming back from what you remember?*

H.D.: *Yes, when you come back again you come back because you want to, not because you are being forced to go to school ... You have to really budget. You are saving. That's your goal to get through. In 1976 I couldn't really care about school, but now I realize how important it is.*

Interviewer: *Do you think it's inevitable that sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds don't see it like that? How does that class you are in strike you?*

H.D.: *They see it's important but I don't think they realize how important. There's a lot to learn when you leave school, you know, and they haven't found it yet.*

Interviewer: *Do you enjoy the company and make friends with the youngsters here?*

H.D.: *Yes, I'm not too old to enjoy their company and everything. I think they've got the cream of the school in that literature class. It's really good.*

Interviewer: *It was conducted like a university seminar, wasn't it?*

H.D.: *Yes. I feel if you stress to the kids that they are going to be treated as adults, then you get an adult class... People act as you act to them.*

Interviewer: *Is there anything else you would like to tell me which we haven't explored, about a school like this which is becoming part of a community education scheme with its twenty-five to thirty mature-age students?*

H.D.: *Well, I don't think it's a fault on the school's part, but they don't do anything in the way of training you for outside. When you walk through the doors, you know, you hit a new world. One part of your life is school and the next part of your life you don't know where you are and it's very confusing. I don't know if it will ever come about, but I would like to see schools - like to see kids go out for jobs for a while, work training. They do it a little bit, but not enough.*

Interviewer: *They've got something called 'work experience' here, haven't they?*

H.D.: *Yeah, they do it, but I don't know - you are never taught the real basics about life and experience; but then again, I think you have to leave school to experience it anyway.*

Interviewer: *Don't you think the visits to places where people work and the chance to talk to them...*

H.D.: *Yeah, oh, I think it helps a great deal because when you leave school you are not faced with the brilliant future that you have always thought of. You are faced with unemployment lines and dole cheques and red tape - that's what it's all about. ... It all comes back to basics, I suppose. That's one of the reasons I came back, you know. I realized there had to be more to life than unemployment and jobs where you use your hands but your mind is going mental. You go insane. I couldn't stand it.*

Does Hugh speak for a whole generation? The Principal said there were eight hundred fifteen-to-twenty-year-old students unemployed in the area.

MAKING APPROPRIATE EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS A REALITY

The Year 8 integrated course

This experimental programme is aimed at giving the first-year high school students a more settled environment - more like the primary schools they have come from. There is a year teacher responsible for the programme, and he takes all four core subjects. The aim is a multi-subject teacher for all Year 8s. The Principal thinks that the stabilizing effect of fewer single-subject teachers at this age is more important than subject expertise, and most parents contacted would like to see the primary situation of one teacher for several subjects continued at least into the first year of high school. The year teacher said:

> *I would say that most teachers who are on the programme are quite happy with it. They feel it has been of some benefit for themselves and the kids. As Year 8 Master it enables me to see what Year 8 problems are and I think a lot of these have been simply disorientation in the school. The programme helps to solve this.*

The wide range of options

The Principal said:

> *We're not aiming our policy at the potential unemployed. I think that if we can't guarantee them something after school we have to guarantee them something during school. Our thrust is twofold. First, let them realize their academic potential, and further, give them the opportunity of engaging in studies that are of specific interest to them as individuals. That's why we have a tremendous range of options - well over seventy subjects. We're expanding as the need becomes apparent. We have courses in film-making, photography, all the manual arts, music, the agricultural options, alternative maths (practical), and what we call 11a social science and 11a science tailored to fit non-academic students - motor transport, electronics, even taxidermy - the only courses in W.A.*

The intention behind this variety of courses is to make the school provide for the wide range of individual, non-academic interests that many students have as well as providing the traditional curriculum for the most able. This means a great extension to the traditional curriculum. We illustrate from the agricultural studies.

The school farm is educational rather than vocational in origin and practice. To quote again from the Principal:

> *We did a spot survey of what the kids were interested in. I had a notion that the urban kids were interested in agriculture and an alternative life-style and would want an escape from the rat race more than rural kids, and that turned out to be justified. The first year we offered an agricultural option there were four hundred kids in the school who took the course. It's dropped to two hundred and fifty and will go up to three hundred next year (twenty-five per cent of the school population). We got a great surprise from the reaction of the primary schools. We have about a dozen schools visiting this place. All our contributory schools come on a timetable basis every couple of weeks for a morning... The whole idea of agricultural education in an urban area has been very successful. The courses in animal husbandry and market gardening lead on to upper school, and in order not to shut out the less able we have practical farming. At the upper-school level we have matriculation courses in agricultural science.*

We have quoted from this field of study because it arose from a deliberate attempt to build on children's general interests and has been integrated through primary and secondary programmes to tie in with certification. It thereby demonstrates the possibility of broadening the traditional curriculum within the reach of students at all levels of ability.

The social education course and work experience

All lower school students take the course and the programmes are the responsibility of the teacher-in-charge, who sees them as an important aspect of community education. The teacher responsible for work experience said:

> *We've got a programme here - Social Education. It replaces Human Relations and Health Education and adds a considerable amount. It's about, oh, sex, drugs, disadvantaged people, political philosophies, religions, all sorts of things. It's purely that, social education... The social education people do the responsibilities of employers and employees in the first few weeks. That gives us time to organize vocational surveys and start working on visits for them; the English staff do interviews and telephone techniques and that sort of thing, and then the final thrust is the kids going out for a mock interview and then on to work experience. Certainly next year there'll be more integration between the social education course, the parts of employment and orientation covered by the English staff, and what I do in arranging work experience... If we can integrate the whole school, that's one way of achieving meaningful education for the kids, rather than bell goes, switch off, and switch on forty minutes later to something else. They may be able to see some reason for what they are doing.*

This teacher is responsible for organizing preliminary visits to local industries, information about jobs and practice interviews, and the final period of work experience for some one hundred and fifty third year students, and he also has views about the kind of education students need today. He said:

> *... Try to develop them as a person, because the person is a community member. That's the thing that has got to survive, emotionally and physically and, you know, economically or whatever. If a person is not adaptable, survival is difficult... If their education - their socialization, if you like - was more diversified, they would be better able to cope with whatever comes up.*

He thought academic education was no longer enough - though, as yet, the work experience is chiefly organized on behalf of the Year 10 leaving students. He said:

> *In most schools work experience is limited to a certain low ability, but here some of the 'advanced' kids can go... A lot of the employers say that a week is too short really to assess them... I hope, next year, to extend it to two weeks - certainly for some of the very low achievers.*

However, what he would really like is to set up a work-release programme in which students would spend a day a week during their last year with a local employer. This would give them a chance to actually learn some work skills. Such a course would be parallel to the existing Year 11 alternative courses and he has already found support for the idea from local firms.

Examinations and assessment

Curriculum innovations always involve discussion about how they relate to certification, and as usual opinions varied about the existing examination system. We quote some samples:

The Principal: The BSE comparability tests

> *... a statistical exercise rather than revealing about the student... They have to be averaged, modified, moderated and every school needs its own computer to keep up with it. Whether all the work that goes into these records is justified is doubtful.*
>
> The TAE
>
> *To the extent that it influences our curricula, I'm not very happy... We're still tied, in maths and sciences especially, to what the tertiary institutions think is relevant for their entry requirements. I don't think we should be, because only about fifteen per cent at most of students go on to tertiary institutions ... whose prerequisites unfortunately trickle down from the fifteen per cent who need them and more or less dictate what the other eighty-five per cent are going to do if they want to do chemistry, physics or mathematics.*

He thought, however, the Achievement Certificate was a great improvement on the strait-jacket of the old Junior Certificate, and that in the long term we should be found to be moving away from all assessments other than matriculation.

Senior Master of English

> *I think it's (the BSE comparability tests) a very useful guide. If you took that away, if you didn't have comparability of some sort, there would be a tendency for schools to move away from a comparable assessment, comparable to or with each other.*

Interviewer: *Do you require your staff, in the English Department, to give regular assessments for specific parts of English, e.g. comprehension, grammar exercises, book reviews, essays, etc.?*

S.M.: *Only to the extent that we say so much per cent should go to work done in the classroom and so much per cent to work done outside the classroom, but we don't specify what that work is. In lower school we do. We say that comprehension will carry so much per cent, and technical aspects of language so much per cent.*

Interviewer: *But you don't say you want marks for each of these set 'topics' every week?*

S.M.: *No, no, we don't do that. All I suggest is that there should be one piece of written work marked each week.*

From an interview with two young English teachers in their third year of teaching

M.J.: *I find the BSE, because it tests like most exams - I mean the written form of the language - frustrates me, because I know how much better my sort of kids are orally... It frustrates me because they don't get tested on that, and they would do much better.*

N.C.: *Especially the lower-ability kids... the differences between some of those kids' abilities are obviously an indictment of the rest of us in that we haven't picked up these differences and worked on them before now.*

M.J.: *But it all depends on what you think the BSE and the comparability tests are looking for. If tests are designed as a sort of streaming mechanism as a means of prising out those kids who are going to be most suitable for upper school, well, then, it is sort of serving a purpose, but if you want it to be a fair judgement of a child's ability to communicate, well, it isn't.*

The Principal's awareness of the pervasive effect of external examinations on the curriculum was not part of the awareness of these English teachers. Might their perceptions have been enlarged had there been a staff seminar to explore the effect of the examination system on an innovatory school-based curriculum? However, the Year 8 teacher shared the Principal's view:

Year 8 teacher

> *From my experience, every subject is concerned with getting their kids assessed. Year 8 - see what he achieved and put him in Year 9 according to his grading - Basic, or whatever it might be. Then in Year 9 he's graded again for Year 10, and then he's shipped out as a can of beans or sardines at the end of Year 10. Everyone is concerned about getting the various kids grouped according to their ability, which is a tragedy. The boss's concept is that we're to give the kids an education, rather than a 'subjectation' - rather than the education of a subject...*

THE EFFECT OF COMMUNITY ORIENTATION ON ENGLISH TEACHING

The potential for work in English in this school was very great. Language development begins with articulating experience and the school is much richer than many in the variety of experiences it provides - the integrated Year 8 should make for greater confidence and opportunity to know teachers better (both conditions for language growth); the wide range of options relation to children's interests (e.g. the farm), the students' participation in school committees, the work-experience programmes, the encouragement of work outside classrooms (social education courses) - all these could be sources for developing talk and writing in realistic contexts. We were not in the school long enough to be able to see how fully this potential is realized. It was not explicit in any of the English department self-descriptions or policy documents, though some of the younger teachers were beginning to discover it for themselves.

M.J.: *My Third Year Basics asked if they could have the Wednesday period to discuss what was happening in the world, but could they please not do it the way they do in Current Affairs, with a test every week. They wanted to ask questions and talk about the why and how and what's the result...*

N.C.: *And I got my Basics to make a list of what they thought they ought to know before they went out into the world. They wanted to know about apprenticeships and how you stand with the police, about insurance, and how to buy a car, about taxation and how to vote. They are desperate to know how to vote. They do learn about these things in social studies, but it's isolated. They need to connect it all up through talking about it... I have never seen them like that before. I realize how badly I had been teaching them the rest of the year. It made me quite guilty. I felt the same when I got my Year 9s to do a series of talks on whatever they wanted to, and most of them brought parts of their life that I didn't realize at all... I'm sure I could have done something earlier to have picked that up and worked on it. I didn't realize how productive it was going to be.*

The effect of the mature students on the senior classes is given in the excerpts from interviews earlier in this study. Part of this effect must be seen as a product of the open relationship between the senior English teachers and their students, of the open and speculative nature of the written assignments in Year 12 English (long poems, satirical plays, reflective writing) and of mutual choice of poems for reading and discussion. To quote again from a mature student:

'People act as you act to them.'

But in this school, as in most others we visited, upper-school English is a world apart. The Principal saw the whole English scene as follows:

> *A teacher who can't get kids to weep or laugh over their study of English has missed the point. I'm afraid that would include a large proportion of English instructors. It becomes a sterile, dead sort of study rather than a living, bubbling, stimulating experience.*

STAFF COMMUNICATION AND TEACHER DEVELOPMENT: A COROLLARY TO INNOVATION

Pros and cons of the faculty organization

The faculty organization only operates partially in this school. There are two small English staff-room-cum-offices so the English staff is split, and only half the English classes have an English 'home' room. The rest are peripatetic with all the limitations that imposes.

The Principal

> *You have your teachers with their own faculty staff-room in close association, with conferences between them and the interaction of ideas, thoughts, policies and so on. This tends to make a particular faculty far more efficient. The disadvantages are the compartmentalizing and insularity which follows in this putting of yourself into a little subject box without being able to appreciate the view that education is a whole, composed of various subject bricks... Inherent in the concept is this difficulty of communication between the faculties. I think we've opted for a more less informal communication between them.*

An English teacher

> *We are close to the kids all the time; we are close to the things we use. You can come out of the classroom and grab a book and go back in. We work together as a unit and we swap ideas, marking, everything, I suppose, and we get to know about the kids even though you may not teach them...*

The Year 8 teacher

> *Providing stability for Year 8 (the integrated programmes) cuts right across the faculty system. I teach four core subjects, others teach three or two...*

Thus, both the general education directions of the school and its physical organization appear to be in unresolved conflict.

There is also another unresolved conflict: in this case in the English department itself. There are, in effect, two programmes for English in the lower school set out in two documents with two different kinds of course books and referred to as English One and English Two. These reflect, not the usual spectrum of divergent views in an English department, but a polarizing of divergences focused on a skills approach versus an experience approach. The senior master believes in running the department democratically so the teachers are free to teach as they think best. We thought the situation was aggravated by the two small staff-rooms and the peripatetic teaching; much might have been resolved in day-to-day, or even minute-by-minute contacts had this been a factor of the physical set-up of the school. We also noted the comments of the two teachers quoted below about the lack of staff meetings and discussion. There seemed little opportunity for people's ideas to rub off one against another. These may be the reasons why the divergence remains an unresolved conflict.

Teacher development

The Principal

> *The major problem with professional growth is communication within a staff, of having time to get together and talk over problems. Most staff have tremendous potential...*

An English teacher (1)

> *What I really miss at this school which we had at my other school was all the staff got together in lots of staff meetings. I really thought it was very constructive because anybody who had anything they wanted to air could bring it up, and it was thrashed out and people got to know how everybody felt, all departments... And everything that was going to be innovated, the headmaster brought it up in front of us and we could argue about it and present our point of view... But here I just get the feeling that I am a sort of teacher who teaches, and things get passed down to me, and that's it.*

An English teacher (2)

> *We have very few staff meetings: we are lucky if we get one a term... We have gatherings in recess times when people stand up and say this is going on and this is going to happen. We don't actually get together with the staff very often...and they have even cut down the number of subject meetings; we often have to wait two or three weeks for a subject meeting.*

QUERY

Is informal communication between the staff adequate for the dissemination and discussion of school policies? Where, in informal communication, does the time come from for staff consultation and co-operation? The active work of the school committees might be thought to provide for this, but the number of people actually involved is necessarily few. It is interesting to look at Special Innovation Study No. 3 to consider the effect of the formal (as distinct from informal) procedures set up there to facilitate staff communication and professional growth.

SPECIAL INNOVATION SCHOOL NO. 1

LARGE COUNTRY SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

REASONS FOR SELECTION

This case study has a dual focus. Firstly, it is a study of an English department - staff and students - in an old established senior high school in a country town of some 20,000 inhibitants. Secondly, it looks at an experiment in local, self-directed teacher development under the leadership of the high school senior English master. We chose this school in order to study the effects of its English department on teacher development in other schools and vice versa.

THE SPECIAL PROJECT

The senior English master applied for and was awarded a grant from the Schools Commission to develop talk and personal writing as a means of learning in all subjects. The Commission had already funded a community education centre, with tape and video equipment, books and co-ordinator. The Senior Master of English at the local senior high school had taken an active part in the establishment of the Centre and was on the administrative committee.

From the resource of the Centre he set about drawing in any teachers from any of the schools in the town - primary or secondary - from any subject, who were interested in considering the role of language in learning. Through meetings, working parties and courses, teachers from the three high schools and seven of the primary schools became involved in exploring various aspects of language development in their schools. Though one of their primary objectives was to document and estimate the value of small-group talk as a means of better learning, the teachers concerned with English led the way in developing personal reflective writing as the link between talk and writing on the one hand, and between talk and thinking on the other.

What gave this experiment in teacher development its particular force was the ongoing two-way flow between schools and the Centre - discussion of ideas, exchange of views and information, experiment in school, outcomes brought back to the Centre for further discussion, and so on.

Part of the dynamics of this local teacher development came from the high level of understanding of the English department in the high school.

They provided a force and coherent direction which is rare. Central to their philosophy of education is the belief that students should understand - and participate in - the aims of the English department - or, in the case of younger students, understand why they are asked to do this or that. To achieve this, students must reflect - in talk or writing - on their own learning. The forms of writing that offer most scope for reflection are journals and, in an alternative literary mode, poems and stories. To this end, the keeping of personal journals written for the teacher - but *unassessed* - were made part of the regular programme in the upper school, and creative writing was a permanent option. These ideas spread through the Education Centre to other schools in the Project, and we shall be reporting on the various developments later in this study.

NARROWING THE FOCUS

The school has about 1,000 students and an English staff of six. The English staff-room, office, equipment store and classrooms are together in one block.

We set out, in this school, to study the work the students did in the context of the beliefs and attitudes and ways of working of the English department, and to try to gauge the effect of a department with a coherent theory of English teaching and learning on the work of the students. But to look at the work in detail meant taking a narrower focus than we had taken in other schools. We settled, therefore, to study only two areas of English in this school:

- Writing (in subject English) in Years 11 and 12.
- Talk in Year 8.

But this narrower focus meant that we looked at work more intensively than we were able to do in other case-study schools, so it is in this study that we illustrate student work most fully because we were able to set it in the context of the English department's views and procedures.

We chose to look at upper-school classes for the following reasons: We thought we should see the effect of this English department on the students' work most clearly where the participants were most articulate; we chose upper-school classes because that is where examination pressure is greatest and the scope for English most likely to be restricted; and we chose to look at English rather than English literature, because English is a compulsory subject in the TAE and therefore the range of student ability is relatively wide. Also there is no set syllabus so there *should* be scope for school-based directions in the work.

SUBJECT ENGLISH IN THE UPPER SCHOOL: MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

SOME ILLUSTRATIONS

(1) The Year 12 students were asked to discuss in small groups what they thought were the aims of upper-school English and then to write up individual statements. One student wrote:

> *I think the first and foremost aim is to ensure we all pass the TRUMPET (TAE). I know the teachers try to convince us and themselves that this isn't the main aim but when it all boils down, the only reason we are at school is to receive our TAE certificate.*
>
> *I think other than this the teachers aim to:*
>
> - *allow us to be able to formulate our own ideas and express them with confidence within a group;*
> - *give us a wide diversity of reading so we can learn to appreciate all kinds of literature;*
> - *help us develop our sense of creativity and learn the joys of writing things for ourselves;*
> - *let us develop our own unique style of expression.*

Another wrote:

> *Certainly English is a curriculum where a student can learn about himself... The English lessons should also be enjoyable, an oasis from the rest of school drudgery. Unlike other subjects, English is an avenue for developing and putting to use creativity and imagination.*

These examples are typical.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about these statements is that 'passing the Trumpet' is seen as distinct from all other aims. The students do not see them as connected in any way. Yet if the first writer's aims were fulfilled by the students they would pass their TAE in their stride, which they apparently do.

Subsequently the students were given the printed aims of the English department to read and were amazed to find it so similar to their own much valued independent views. The whole exercise was a step towards mutual understanding.

(2) Part of the management framework of a big school or department is the circulation of written notices. If we look at some of the printed documents that the senior English master got out from time to time, we can see that he worked with the staff (as with the students) by a process of explanation, consultation and discussion. His circulars were for information *and* discussion; some were just for discussion. They were brief, and the sense of orders coming from above was counteracted by their personal tone, and sometimes an eccentric heading, e.g. 'How I learnt to stop worrying and love the English Department: notes on administration'. They appear to take up an ongoing conversation. For example, in a circular for discussion by the staff about the assessment of written work he prefaced his practical suggestions by writing:

> *I explained to my class that I believed they write best when they write for a real purpose and a real audience... and that they learn to write by writing.*
>
> *I suggested that, as I believed assessment could affect the quality of their written response negatively, I would only assess five pieces of writing during the term... My original intention was to tell the class which five pieces would be assessed. They asked instead that they hand up their best five pieces at the end of term...*

He takes the parents into his confidence in a similar way, explains to them and asks for their help. In a circular about homework he wrote:

> *We believe that students learn to write by writing, perhaps in much the same way that they learn to talk by talking...*
>
> *... Although the benefits of reading, writing and talking are not always obvious we believe that these do contribute significantly to students' language development.*

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

> *We believe that conversation with adults is important... so talking with and listening to your children is important.*
>
> *Many parents may enjoy reading the novels which their children read as part of the English courses. Often these novels deal with issues of significance to adolescents and reading with your children may lead to interesting and worthwhile discussion.*
>
> *And we consider ... current affairs important. Any ways you can foster an interest in this field will benefit your children's education - e.g. newspapers, and listening and viewing of broadcasts.*

And again in his sheet for students he introduced the assignments by explaining as well as giving instructions. He wrote:

> *I believe the best assignments are those which evolve as a result of reading combined with the personal experience of the writer. Consequently you are asked to do some background reading. It is expected that you become involved in a personal way in the assignment. Try interviews - but don't just report what was said, describe your reaction to what was said... if you're writing about primary education, visit one or two primary schools, interview some teachers and some students.*

About journals he wrote:

> *It should consist of your own personal expressive writing. You may write in any form you like, or a variety of forms, including poetry, prose, drama or art work. You should write about things that are important to you. It can be written, if you like, for a private, restricted audience... It should show your view of your life and of the world in which you live.*

There are a number of other documents which space does not allow us to quote, but they all carry significant, implicit messages. They assert a belief in relationships based on face-to-face talk irrespective of status within the school hierarchy; and this goes for students as well as staff. As a result the English staff have created an environment in which reading and the discussion of ideas is part of the life of the English department - staff and students alike. The staff-room is itself a continuing seminar for ideas about literature, about writing, about education and about the place of language in learning.

WRITING IN SUBJECT ENGLISH: YEARS 11 AND 12

Two directions or one?

The programme for written work falls clearly into parts - the development of general writing ability, and specific preparation for the TAE examination. Each is treated with similar thoroughness and understanding of its value. It is too often assumed that these two directions are mutually exclusive. The work in this school demonstrates that they are not. We deal cursorily with the preparation for the TAE papers because it is very much what all English teachers do, whereas the development of general writing ability and, by implication, the development of intellect and personality, is not something that all teachers do. One of the senior English master's circulars to the staff - this time primarily for information - exemplifies this area of subject English. It deals with all the practical and administrative matters of the written English exam - information about the availability of test material and past papers, references to books that are particularly useful in relation to items on the paper, warnings that concentration on test material is not the best way to help students pass their exams, advice about the need to put some pressure on - and also the need to take it off - and a reminder that literature is always at the back of good writing. It's all there.

Assignments and options

The English staff regard these long assignments as being of major importance in the student's general development and in the development of their writing abilities.

Students in Year 11 undertake one long assignment; in Year 12 they do two. An assignment may take from six weeks to a term or more to complete. Options in both years include

A six weeks' journal.

Any topic of their own choosing.

A major creative work - a play, radio play, a book of poems, two or more short stories.

In 1978, topics suggested by the teachers were

Unemployment; Old Age; Your Future Career; Immigration; Primary or Special Education.

One might be tempted to say about the suggested topics that they are limited by their sociological slant, but the emphasis that these teachers place on first-hand experience needs remembering; this itself places a limit on the topics. The only ones suggested are those where first-hand experience is possible. Furthermore, in every assignment, one of the options is 'a topic of your own choosing'. This, together with the option to write poems, stories or a play gives scope for more imaginative directions. And there is the journal with its emphasis on reflecting an experience.

Language as an educator: the theory behind the programme

The list of assignments is not random, or merely a number of 'stimulating' suggestions. It reflects the *conscious* operating constructs of the teachers in the department about the nature of writing and its relation to learning. The following summary is based on discussions we had in the English department.

Scope for intention

At first sight one could say the programme gives the students a lot of 'choice'. We prefer to use the word 'intention', in Bruner's sense as a gatherer of tacit powers. (Bruner, 1974.) The word covers a wide spectrum of meanings. At one end are those concerns which cause students to write about this rather than that in free choice situations - which concerns are often unrecognized until expressed; and, on the part of teachers, the fostering of students' attempts to find their own directions in the belief that this is how powers of language and thought are most easily gathered.

At the other end are all the manifold deliberate intentions such as practising comprehension tests for an exam, or writing a journal three times a week or any other practical decision. The teachers saw intention as the most significant aspect of commitment to learning and writing.

First-hand experience

Adolescents are concerned about many things beyond their personal experience yet good writing has its root in what is personally known. Talking to people who have experienced what you have not is one way of bridging the gap. Therefore the *suggested* assignments are limited to those where students can draw on people as resources (as well as books) and on their own powers of observation.

Creative writing

This option reflects a belief in the unity of 'imaginative transformations of experience', whether it be reading literature or writing one's own, and a belief also in the powers and satisfactions that creative writing gives many students. It also provides a perceptible link between personal and literary experience.

Journals

The teachers saw journals as the link between talking and reflective writing. Because a journal has no set form, the older students used this freedom to experiment with language. It provided scope for all sorts of 'intentions'. Two of the English teachers in written statements said:

> *Perhaps the journal could be said to combine speaking and writing. They speak to their journals, certainly in a different, more cultivated language than that of spoken conversation, but infinitely more expressive than the kind of writing in which so much emphasis is placed in many classrooms.*

and

> *Writing of this sustained, informal kind 'frees the hand'. Rather than fighting every word, willing it on to the page, it gradually becomes a fully natural response, i.e. the writer is not alienated from his writing.*

The teachers also saw reflection on learning experiences as an important part of learning itself. Talk and journal writing are the most accessible channels.

Teachers as advisers, interested readers and discussants

Teachers can wear many hats. The teachers in this department see their primary role as consultants, interested readers and discussants as against a secondary role as assessors. This is not only an aspect of a philosophy of learning but because the long written assignments demand this kind of response from a teacher.

Samples of student writing

In the examples of student writing that follow we have tried to illustrate the range and quality of the work. It is hard to escape the charge that we have selected only the best. This is not so. It is true that isolated examples of excellence occur in all schools but they tend to be the work of exceptional students. In this case study we have set the examples of writing in their context of attendant circumstances - the beliefs and ways of working of the English teachers, and we suggest that these features in the context make a profound difference to the *general level* of work in English.

We have selected writing to illustrate the four areas of choice the students are given:

- A topic suggested by their teachers.
- A self-chosen topic other than creative work.
- A major creative work.
- Journals.

We were also interested to look at

- What students do with the suggested topics.
- How they explore ideas.
- How they use secondary material.
- How they experiment with writing styles (language use).
- What use they make of the creative writing assignment - how they use it, *indirectly*, to explore their ideas and experiences as distinct from treating it directly in the other two choices.
- What kind of links they make with literature.

Furthermore, we were interested in these students as *learners;* we have seen their efforts not only as an accuracy exercise in approximating to levels of adult, public writing (though it is also partly that), but as an aspect of potential - of a learner having a go - experimenting and saying to himself, 'This is me writing; and I know my teacher will understand what I'm trying to do and help me to do it better.'

(1) 'Special Education'. (A suggested topic.)
Joanne called her study 'Slow Learners' School' and commented,

> *... this is its household name, and very unfairly, as this title becomes branded on the children, making their handicap even greater.*

It consisted of a diary continuing over the year she worked on the topic (March to September), and a series of essays, or 'reports', dealing with particular occasions or aspects. It concluded with a poem. The sources of her practical experience were two-weekly visits to the Special School (and some excursions with them), and less regular visits to the remedial class in her own school. Her diary covers both these sources.

Her introduction is brief and formal:

> *Within this assignment, which includes information and comment from both the Remedial class (in her own school) and the 'Slow Learners' School', I have aimed to express my feelings from personal contact with them - not the opinions of others.*
>
> *Mrs L. played a large role in my interest in this direction... and what experience I gained is recorded in diary form...*
>
> *I've enjoyed myself while obtaining information for this, and enjoyed reading books related to this, and I hope you will receive similar pleasure from this assignment.*

Here is a sense of the function of an introduction, of appropriate language, of her audience, and of herself as a writer.

Two diary excerpts illustrate a different mode and purpose:

> *11 April*
> *I sat all night on the floor playing this simple, long, boring, frustrating card game with ONE girl. She was very nice though...*
>
> *... she was very happy and obviously enjoying all the activity and noise of the evening. She made me think just how fortunate I was to have so many opportunities and luxuries. I wonder what future there is for these kids; many of them now adults by age. I suppose a lot of that would depend on us, society in general, how well we are going to accept them and give them opportunities and a feeling of belonging.*
>
> *1 August*
> *I couldn't help thinking tonight how very wrong it is to have those Cocos Island children in the 'Slow Learners' School'. Why, they're not slow, they only have a language problem. What they need is to be sent to a migrant school - not a slow learner school where they won't learn anything to help them cope with work, and Australian society. There is something very wrong with the system if these kids are in this type of school - almost pushed away in the background...*

The 'reports' or 'essays' on excursions with the Special School children are a mixture of descriptions of the day and the children, of reflections on the events and the people and of more general comments. It is expressive and personal in style, nearer the diary than the introduction, but in the pattern of the whole, these essay-reports provide a framework and a viewpoint which give a broader perspective to the diary entries.

Her teacher thought she had learned many things from the study. Among these was what she had learned about writing itself from the interplay between the diary entries and the more consciously shaped essay-type pieces. He observed she did not have full command of her writing and was pleased at the growing control that he could see developing in the study as a whole.

(2) 'On Writing' (a self-chosen topic)

Mary (Year 12) chose to do her assignment on 'writing'. In her introduction she wrote:

> *When I first started this assignment I had very optimistic ideas about completing a long, involved, very thorough assignment. Half way through I nearly gave up the idea for a lost cause - the topic was just too broad. However, I persevered and changed my topic to become: 'What Writing Means to Me', thus by narrowing it and personally approaching the topic instead of being general, I became more confident and at ease with my chosen subject.*

Mary is describing problems of structure in a long assignment on a topic which won't be contained in the way the teacher-suggested topics could be contained. She began in a very practical way by attempting to interview and summarize the views of people who actually do different kinds of writing in the world. But this structure did not allow her to explore for herself many aspects of writing that she was interested in, such as her recent realization that a sense of audience was now an influence on what she wrote; or that inspiration is not enough. By re-focusing her topic on 'What Writing Means to Me', she found a structure in which she could move in any direction.

In its final form Mary's study consisted in part of fullish reports of her interviews with people professionally concerned with writing - a journalist, a 'part-time' professional writer (i.e. a struggling poet), teachers of maths, social studies, English and science, and an upper-school student; and in part of two long essays called 'From Talking to Writing' and 'Why I Write', in which she explored from her own experience many of the notions touched on by the people interviewed in the earlier part of her study. 'Why I Write' is concerned with exploring what she has learnt from creative writing on the one hand, and from what she calls 'educational writing' on the other. Her essay 'From Talking to Writing' is really a documentation of the place of talking and writing in her own learning. She sees her own formulations as a key to her understanding, and her journal, therefore, as an important bridge between classroom discussion and the formal writing that her teacher will expect. She wrote:

> *... When in practice of talking about a subject, then writing about it, I feel a journal is an essential part of this. This means, that apart from any writing the teacher may 'want', there is also an outlet for writing your own thoughts on a subject, in your own words. Thus, before attempting to convey all your knowledge in the correct fashion, in a formal piece of writing, an understanding is gained thru' having written about the topic in your own words first. I have found this of immeasurable use to me.*

(3) 'Selected Poems with a Commentary' (a major creative work)

Dianne sent in six poems, each of which was accompanied by a 'commentary' giving the context and the feelings from which it originated. In her introduction she wrote:

By writing this collection of poetry I am now able to distinguish between real poems and false poems. False poems are those written in primary and lower school where you are told to 'write a poem about your holidays'. The topic of a real poem is your own, a subject in which you have interest and would like to convey your ideas, or just reveal your mood.

There is great difficulty in writing what you really feel. I don't have full control what I write. Because poems are short there is a need to be precise; every word seems to have an importance and it is hard to find the word which is desired. Often poems may not turn out exactly as desired, the theme may not be exactly conveyed...

This collection of poems is about things which I find of interest and a couple are an expression of moods.

Poem 1

Rats run round
tricking one another
like us.
Society suspects,
doesn't
trust,
induces
others to
extract the 'essence'
of life for oneself.
Importers of
urbanization are reflected
by falsities like
planned obsolescence.
A smart move.
But,
pull hard enough
and you will break away.
Go back to the real being.
Exist in
the earth.
Mould and form
with the tools
of man.
Let your hands
create with
mud
not
money
and you
will be more
complete.

Commentary

This poem is written about our 'rat race' society. Money governs the working man. Everyone is fighting for more money, the government taxes us, the businessman uses his cunning, and the manufacturers have caught on to one of the smartest moves - planned obsolescence.

The urban agglomeration attracts with it a kind of craziness where everyone is obsessed with the need to have more money and outdo the rest of society.

A minority group exists and I think may be growing. People who want to break away and live their own lives where they are boss and money is important as a source of food, not dishwashers or colour TV sets. The kind of people breaking away are craftsmen, using their hands as their tools and making artwork with parts of themselves contained. The life is perhaps more primitive but has an inviting cleanliness and honesty about it.

Poem 2

They are drifting gently
suspended in society.
In an aimless, effortless
manner they are not
quite one of us.
They are of a particular
sort
distinguished by their own
peculiar characteristic
which is intangible.
Somewhere is a numbness
preventing response,
an altered portion producing
speciality.

Commentary
I have been studying the special students at our school. I am interested in them and have found out much of what I wanted to know both from their teachers and from them... I think anyone doing research on this group of kids would get more out of being involved with them than they would out of books, but once you know them, the interest in doing an assignment diminishes because with me, I consider it a waste of time which should be spent more valuably with them...

The special students are a unique group of people. They are literally drop-outs. They don't really fit into society. The retarded children know how to join in and respond. They are very emotional and loving. The special kids do not want to join in and find it awkward to react to the rest of society. The reason I have worked out, is because the special students are bright enough to be aware of their speciality whereas the retarded children are not aware of their deficiency.

The poem is written to convey the children's floating position in society. They are not completely normal but neither are they retarded. They are nothings, and that is their problem.

Some students sent in stories; one boy sent in a novella. We could not quote these since short excerpts tell nothing about the whole.

(4) Journals

First, excerpts from journals about journals - different students reflecting on changes in themselves and in their writing.

> Student A
>
> *Because I was so apprehensive and inhibited my first few pieces were very blunt and somewhat similar to a history book ... reading back over what I've written my change from formal impersonal English to a flowing and natural style is evident, and by ambiguous, self critical and half conversational types of writing I amused myself making the hassle of writing every night pleasurable ... The most outstanding value gained for me was that I became more aware of the outside world.*
>
> Student B
>
> *I found that with writing regularly, my ability to write improved enormously, not only in the quality of the result but in the ease of actually doing the writing...*
>
> *I often used my writing as a thought formulating process... The journal also helped me to understand myself and my place in life... In a very indirect way this better understanding of myself helped me to develop an identity and gain confidence in myself as an individual. I wrote what I really thought and felt - just what I wanted to write and what was 'me'.*
>
> Student C
>
> *When I started writing it I hoped to make my journal more interesting by making it more for public consumption. I suppose I am a person who likes other people knowing what I think about things...*
>
> Student D
>
> *I dislike others reading what I write because I fear they may think it drivel, (so to speak). I know that I can improve my writing by writing something which only you (teacher) and myself can read. To tell you the truth I have lost some of my inhibitions as the year goes on through writing a journal at home.*

In reading the journals (with permission) we were struck both by their diversity and some similarity. Perhaps the similarities are aspects of adolescence and of their shared school lives; the diversities were more unexpected. Some students included poems and others presented a whole range of experimental forms and layout; even the least able wrote direct and thoughtful pieces.

> Student E
>
> (This journal is characterized by the way the writer uses language in any way he wants and obviously enjoys doing so. It is much taken up with reflections about school work, about breaking his leg, and about poetry.)
>
> *I think I went fairly well (in a maths exam) after such a disasterous start, and this is probably because I enjoy maths so much this year. You would, too, if you had Captain Brown for a teacher. With a unique combination of nautical terminology and mathematical theory delivered at great volume through the smoke haze of the occasional Malborough, one cannot help but pay attention...*
>
> (After breaking his leg)
>
> *It is my considered opinion that old Davies (doctor) is at the centre of a sordid little conspiracy to rip off the ignorant and unhealthy of this town... The old Gremlin was hunched over a*

pile of papers writing furiously. He was unimpressed by the drama which surrounded my entry...

(An incident from the Anzac Day parade)
The parade was long since over and the accompanying festivities were drawing to a close... A hundred yards from the door of a rusting iron roofed hotel, an old man had managed to prop himself up to a sitting position against a nearby lamp post. The bottle he had been drinking from rolled from infirm hands... A row of medals pinned in random precision to the lapel of his suit was mute testimony to his part in the dawn parade. He was an original Anzac.

(The story concludes)
The men in the white car who came to take him away seemed to agree that he had been asphyxiated in his own vomit...

I thought it strange that a man who had braved so much and been a distinguished soldier should have suffered the indignity of being slain by such an enemy.

I haven't been so goddam bored as this ever, even. I can't go to school because I can't walk with crutches... Chronic boredom like this calls for desperate remedies. I now resort to poetry writing whether you like it or not. It is called 'Sheep on the River' and was written under the influence of suntan oil fumes and sunshine. It is also about a dream I had last night.

(Unlike his other poems, this is a mocking one.)

Student F
(An excerpt and a poem from an extremely varied and decorated collection.)

Where I am now is through no influence of my own. An old man made me and an old lady helped. Old, that is, in relation to my youngness. They have been there. Not only by them was I made. I was made through circumstances, instances, feelings, moods, times, places: by people. I was made by impressions because I am an impressionable person. I was created by an old man, a stranger whom I met on the wharf, and a foreign lady with a very strong will. Indeed, not solely by my parents...

Our Kitchen Table

Many years it has withstood bangings, cuttings,
jolting and cluttering
Long has it stood unheeded, quiet unobtrusive
Now in the corner, now along the wall
I remember Mama making scones on it at shearing
time and how
Janice (who came to help) spilt some water and
nearly electrocuted herself...

It was still there when we came back after two years.
Ruth made bread on that table, and afterwards
We all sat round and ate it hot.

I have often sat there, head in my arms, bewildered.
Or talking over a cup of tea with Barb.
Plain table top, smooth with age, at each
leg a convenient toe hold
And under each leg, a folded piece of paper
For balance you know.

Student G

(More at the level of day dream than reflection but captures the ebb and flow of feeling more than some.)

Since sitting here for ten minutes many strange thoughts have come over me; this is the first time I have deliberately sat and thought back over the days, people I have known, experiences and what's in store... I'm just filling in five minutes before Paul comes. I haven't been out for so long and I just love going out... I'm getting nervous what I'm going to talk about ... I haven't done anything exciting.

I'm just loving this exploring and research topic in Geography (a field study) so much that I intend to write to the Career Centre to see if they can advise me on a career that is based on such work... I think I might join the Historical Society also; it's about time I had a hobby.

It's good being sick, lazing in bed, radio, drinks and imagination going wild. One minute I want to go on the dole, travel the beaches and rage continuously - then next I want to be a teacher, have a nice flat, a dog and live a conservative simple life like the rest of us... I'm sure people in this world don't do what they want to do, but just what others would like them to ...

I have some exciting news - Dianne and I came second in the State-wide open Geography competition: that was for our assignment (field study) ... It's great to know that all that hard work is rewarded - $50.00. I feel rather proud actually and it's the first time I have ever won a prize at anything.

Doubts are often expressed about the value of this kind of writing, which is so near speech. It is possible that the benefits are indirect; however, the fact that this student won a prize for a geography study suggests that she had a more formal mode available.

TALK IN YEAR 8

The upper-school students said talk was so much a part of the way they worked that it didn't matter whether they were in groups of four or seated ten or fifteen around a table. Before they gained confidence they thought the small group was important. So size of class and the youth of the speakers make small groups especially valuable in Year 8.

Samples of student talk

Small-group talk

One of the English teachers took a relief lesson in social studies with a class unaccustomed to group work. Afterwards he discussed the lesson with three of them.

Kate: *In social studies today we've gone into small groups of three or four people and we talked about, oh ... medieval times and pretended to be other people and I was a knight ... and I thought it was a lot more interesting than just writing stuff down in a book and copying off the board and sort of listening to the teacher while he talks away.*

Theresa: *And um - I was pretending that I was just a little child in - ah - medieval times and if we do it this way instead of just writing down in our books it's much more - more educational 'cause we get to write what we want to write and what we think about the community ... and then we get the teacher to come along and correct us if we're a bit wrong or something like that. And we're allowed to talk too.*

Teacher: *Do you feel you learned more?*

Theresa: *Yeh, we felt more free - felt more free to what you wanted to do.*

Kate: *More confident.*

Theresa: *... this time it was something like this. We write down what we actually said ourselves and so we actually said it and wrote it down, so we learned twice as much, you know - about twice as much because we said it and wrote it down, instead of the teacher raving on all the time and we're just sitting there half asleep.*

These children wanted to learn, wanted to use their imaginations, to talk, to write and discuss the value of the lesson they had just had. It seems they had a pretty fair idea about using language to learn with. They went on to discuss the embarrassment of exposing yourself in a class discussion. Small groups were not so intimidating.

Teacher: *How did the working in the small groups help in talking?*

Lesley: *It showed ... um ... people's different points of view, ideas and opinions about things of living in the medieval community.*

Kate: *And you felt more confident, 'cause in a big group, everybody's starring and you get, ah - hot ...*

Theresa: *You can sort of just - um - put your points of view right across 'cause you've only got a couple more people listening to you and you sort of feel you're not really in an open space with dozens and dozens and millions of people in front of you. And anyway you get more of a chance to say more things, 'cause there's less people...*

Extended talk

Teachers in the Project were developing other uses of talk besides conversation and co-operative work in groups. They had observed that the only opportunities that most children get in school for *continuous* utterance is in writing, yet Year 8 students are not very fluent in writing. They thought that opportunities for extended talk would benefit their language development in general.

Narrative

The children's lives - and their journals - are full of small stories. Sometimes story-telling sessions are held, and these mini-tales are expanded for the benefit of the rest of the class - and a tape recorder. One student gave an impassioned account of dog-poisoning in her neighbourhood. When she read the transcript of the taped story she said, 'I found doing my tape very exciting, different from everyday work...' The occasion gave an opportunity to discuss the shaping of a story in a realistic context, i.e. a real audience wanting to ask questions.

Description and exposition

Ann asked her English teacher a few probing questions about why the high school English was so different from English in her primary school. In response he asked her to compare her present work in English with that of her primary school. His purpose was to give her the opportunity to reflect - in speech. Her utterance ran to the end of the tape, some 3,500 words! We quote a short passage where she is comparing using language for real purposes with learning isolated fragments of information about language.

> *I think the more you talk about English and .. er .. ideas in English, the more you really learn about the language, 'cause English is a language and that's what we're learning when we talk about English. You know, we're not learning about 'theirs' and 'to's' and 'how's' and all that - umm - we're learning the language as a whole. I mean ... I learn French in high school and we learn the language itself ... and in English we just talk about different parts of the language in primary school, you know, like for instance 'theirs' and all that ... that's all we're doing, we're talking just about parts of the language, not how we can use the language to put ourselves and our ideas forward.*

This is a complicated notion to formulate and she has several shots at it, but she gets there clearly in her last sentence about *using* language to express ideas.

THE EFFECT OF THE PROJECT AS AN EXPERIMENT IN LOCAL TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

We were particularly struck by the following:

- The way in which the involvement of teachers of different subjects from different high schools and also from primary schools had created an intellectual - and social - climate for the development of ideas and experiment.
- The physical existence of the Education Centre provided a psychological and operational centre for the transmission of ideas; and it also made operational the Schools Commission's view that the evaluation of a project is 'a continuous process of self-criticism and reflection... by which those connected with the project can shape and strengthen its development.' (Tony Ryan, 1978.) For instance, a teacher in a

primary school wrote for us her reflections about the *nature* of the journal writing which her Year 7 students were doing. She wrote:

> *The idea was strange to most of the children ...*
>
> *... eventually journal writing was left to them to do when they wished. Some discontinued writing at this stage.*
>
> *Some would not permit me to see the work, and I did not insist.*
>
> *After reading the journals of some of the class members I see the following outcomes as valuable:*
>
> > *As a way of opening communications between teacher and child.*
> >
> > *To order thoughts and feelings.*
> >
> > *For enjoyment.*
> >
> > *To use the journal as a captive audience.*

At the Centre we read some of the journals, listened to tapes of Year 7 children speaking 'monologues' and discussed the relation of talk to writing with a number of teachers who met us there. Some of the Year 7 students turned up too to listen to tapes of themselves.

- The interest and backing of the principals provided a supportive environment, the absence of which - as a Schools Commission Counsellor said - 'kills many innovations in the foetal stage'. To this should be added the advice and practical help given by the Education Department.

- Different developments in the field of spoken language coming from different schools connected with the Project. Two of these developments had implications much wider whan the Project itself. These were, *first work on extended spoken utterances* (monologues). We were interested because in all our structured interviews in the case-study schools we had asked if teachers gave students opportunities for extended speech. We met no instance of any ideas about how other kinds of extended utterance might be useful. In the Project schools we found monologues being used in the following ways:

  To help slow learners and inadequate writers develop language fluency and ideas and confidence.

  To tell stories - for pleasure, and confidence and shaping the language.

  (To quote from our primary teacher) 'To reflect on past experience which gives shape to the way the child feels'.

  (And again) 'Reflecting on work completed is a way of assessing its value and drawing conclusions from this'.

  To give individual research reports with replies to questions from the audience.

  Oral descriptions.

  Talks on topics that have been or will be written about.

In all cases transcripts were provided from the Education Centre and students could read as well as listen to their utterances.

We thought that the idea of the educational value of talk in school is generally taken to mean small-group talk, and in producing these samples of extended student utterances the teachers were extending current notions, and providing the data for this. The Education Centre has a rich bank of tapes and transcriptions.

A *second* significant development coming from teachers in the high schools was the decision to try to document by video-tape learning in small groups. The audio tapes had been used a good deal in teachers' meetings - and it was at the point that the Project teachers saw their own development programme as useful more widely. In the event a film was made with the assistance of the Education Department Audio-Visual Education Branch.

(5) And finally we thought the sheer *knowledge* about language in education, which the teachers in the high school had first developed among themselves, was responsible for much of the quality of the work going on in the Project as a whole. The initiating teachers had not been content with in-service courses; they had read for themselves a great deal about language, had discussed and tried out applications in their own classes, and so had a firm basis in theory and a verified conception of English. We thought it was this theoretical base for their work which enabled them to open up the upper-school English in the way they had. We are not, of course, saying that successful work was not going on in other schools. We saw much excellent writing and held illuminating conversations with students which could only have come from comparable *practice,* but we did not find a unifying theoretical conception anywhere else. It was the *general* high level of work and commitment by the students which interested us. Quantity, quality and enthusiasm was not confined to the best students. Our guess is that this *general* high standard was at least in part due to their unified conception, which caused them to see 'competence growing incrementally through the interaction of writing, talking, reading and experience'; and as a result their programmes and their strategies of teaching were 'true to language as it actually functions'.

SPECIAL INNOVATION SCHOOL NO. 2

ALTERNATIVE COURSE AT A METROPOLITAN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

REASONS FOR INCLUDING THIS COURSE AS A CASE STUDY

We had originally planned to report on the alternative course against its background of the high school. This would have provided some valuable comparisons of work in English in two very different settings, but it soon became clear that this would take more time than we could afford. We therefore confined our study to the alternative course.

We chose this particular school because of its low socio-economic background and problems associated with migrants, one-parent families, and unemployment. In this setting we were interested in its alternative course which aimed at re-socializing alienated students rather than having a prevocational slant.

DETAILS OF THE COURSE

The course caters for about one hundred students from Years 10 and 11 and is a one- or two-year course depending on the needs of the students concerned. It is very much an independent sub-school and operates from an old demountable on the edge of the campus. The building was repaired, altered, painted and curtained by the staff and students working with a professional carpenter. It includes a class library, a makeshift media centre and a number of smallish rooms. Six teachers, one of whom is the course co-ordinator, run the course as a very close-knit team. They meet formally once a week at 8.00 a.m. for review and planning, though discussion also goes on informally - and continuously - in the staff office. The course consists of a compulsory core and a number of options. The core consists of Friday excursions and the work arising from these; small-group discussion, and six periods of English. Some of the options involve working with classes in the main school. Each student operates from an individual programme, and various kinds of certification are available according to the programme chosen. To complete the course students must attend 80% of the time. They fill in their own attendance cards and are required to ring in before 10.30 on the day of their absence. No note from parents is required. Work experience is not a major component of the course.

From an interview with the Principal

> *The course came into being when we felt there was a large group of students who wanted to return to school after their third year of (high school) education ... but weren't looking at going on to tertiary education. Many weren't ready for further education either, in terms of their personal development, and many didn't really know what they wanted to do when they left school and therefore they were tentative about going into something that had a heavy prevocational emphasis.*

It seemed the students weren't interested in the manual arts options - they had had three years of that, and the girls had already done some typing. He thought, whatever they did, they ought to be more employable at the end of the year than they were at the beginning, though it was important to remember that the school was catering for youngsters who were only fourteen or fifteen years old. There was a need for a variety of school alternative courses because the school students weren't old enough or well enough qualified to get into the tech. The same thing applied to apprenticeships. Any achievement grades at the Basic level almost certainly excluded students from either technical college or an apprenticeship. He said:

> *Each year has seen an increase in the number of students who have wanted to upgrade the levels they received at Year 10 ... so that perhaps the course is becoming vocationally oriented in the sense of general education rather than specific things.*

But he saw their direction in the future as being to expand the number of different courses offered to Year 11 students. Next year they would have the general course, a commerce course, and a pre-vocational programme as well as the academic course leading to the TAE. This would become a general direction in secondary schools because so many more students were staying on. He stressed the importance of negotiating the curriculum with the students - 'I'd say in these sorts of programmes that is of paramount importance'.

It seemed that the course was seen by the students as a fresh start in different surroundings, and with a different pattern of teachers and teaching, and individual programmes. Seventy-five to eighty Year 11 students were working with some twenty Year 10 students.

> *One group is in the business of upgrading their levels, and the others in the business of getting them for the first time.*

Since recruitment was heavy, students who were not succeeding in the traditional school programmes were given priority. He related the lack of success of these students to thier self-image:

> *They're in the business of self-esteem, too. A lot of those kids have a very low opinion of themselves, as too many of the students in this school do ... It's one of the things that prevents them from succeeding.*

The teachers of the course were aiming at building up the students' belief in themselves.

He concluded by saying that one of the big problems in developing successful alternative courses was getting public acceptance for a school graduation certificate.

How the students saw the course: excerpts from an interview with three students taking media studies

A group of students (eventually) selected three of their number to be interviewed. We began by discussing general studies - since English comes under this title - and how they were managing to upgrade their levels.

Student 1 *(grudgingly): Well, at the moment we are starting on the three POs.*

Interviewer: *The three what?*

Student 1: *The three powers, Russia, America and China - the government of these places.*

Student 2: *Well, we learnt that last year in Year 10. It's boring.*

Student 3: *Well, we done racial prejudice, and that was good.*

Student 1: *We'd go round the houses and ask people if they were racially prejudiced, but not ask them directly ...*

Student 3: *We just asked them, you know, strange questions in a roundabout way, and then just figured it out whether they were racially prejudiced or not.*

Interviewer: *Rather like the survey on education they're doing now? Nobody seemed to be telling you how to introduce yourselves or anything. You'd obviously done some before...*

Student 2: *That's something they sort of teach you - how to get on with people, you know ...*

Student 3: *To accept them as what they are, and not as ... like teachers ...*

Student 2: *Oh, I don't know, it's hard to explain ... it's just really different, just to be in this part of the school ...*

Student 1: *Well, it's like nothing else, you know ... it's really good. They don't really worry about teaching you, you know, school work ... but they do teach it to you, and they teach you a lot too ...*

Student 2: *Yeah, well, we are learning.*

Student 1: *... because we are getting our levels up; because our teachers don't put our levels up. The same people that put our levels up are the same people that put the levels up in all the schools, so we must be learning...*

We then went on to discuss what English was in their course, as distinct from general studies.

Student 1: *Our English is like nothing that we have had in other school ...*

Interviewer: *What's the difference ...?*

Student 1: *Over here in English ... it's more ... I don't know, doing our own ... you're sort of doing what you think English is, I think.*

Student 3: *Oh, we don't always talk, you know ... we have to do a lot of writing over here. We work off sheets a lot, but the sheets say what do you think about this, and it's always what do you think, or what's your opinion of ... you know, we aren't taught things up here, we sort of teach ourselves ...*

Interviewer: *What do you think you've taught yourselves in English, whatever English means?*

Student 2: *English over here ... We don't learn how to write properly and speak properly, because, if you can't write or speak properly by the time you get to 16, it would be hard to try and teach you. I mean, if you can't spell a word, they still teach you to spell the word, but they don't sit down and give you spelling tests and stuff like that ... and if you don't use proper grammar they tell you about it, but they don't make a big deal about it.*

Student 3: *If you spell words wrong they always - always tell you about it.*

Interviewer: *So your English seems very practical; you're using it to do all sorts of things - talk to people, like the surveys; to think with ...*

Student 1: *You have to do a lot of thinking ... oh, you have to think about everything.*

We went on to discuss whether they thought their command of English had been improved by the course.

Student 1: *I don't know if I've improved or not. I've read books a lot more this year but I don't know if it's got anything to do with our English in general studies ... It's probably best if you saw some of the questions that we had at the start of last term, and our answers; it's probably best if you looked at our questions.*

Student 3: *See, on these two sheets here, we can do any one of them and we've got a term to do them.*

Student 2: *That, you see, ... that was our term's work for creative writing.*

They then read through the assignment sheets commenting on each one.

Student 2 *(reading the topic aloud): 'Use your imagination and write the story of your own birth.' See, this is a weird thing ...*

Student 1: *There was another one ... You had to look at a tree and it had to look at you ...*

Interviewer *(reading from the sheet): 'It stands silent out in the open, very young when compared to the world but it has been here for years ... Go outside and find a tree something like yourself, draw a picture of it and write a description of the tree.' Well, that's unusual, isn't it?*

Student 1: *It's all unusual ... (Laughter) It's nothing we've done before.*

Student 2: *Then we had to write three essays about an argument between you and your mum, or you and your dad.*

Student 3: *You had to write this essay like ... one essay from your mum's point of view, and then from just a person watching both people argue ... and you have to think... That is really hard to do. You have to think about what someone else watching would think of us, you know, so when we write we have to think of what the other person in the argument would be thinking and write about what they would be thinking ... It's tricky stuff; it's really hard.*

Student 1: *There's another thing you can do here; you can stir up the teachers, and they sort of take it, you know.*

Student 3: *And they do it back to you.*

Student 1: *It's not really ... It is school, but it's not like school, you know.*

Student 2: *You've got teachers, but they're more like your friends.*

Student 1: *Yeah, they're great friends. That's what they are.*

How the teachers saw the course: aims and special features

The course was initially an attempt to provide for the drop-outs and malcontents. As it became better known, many students applied for it who had no special need. Priority in selection remained focused on the disadvantaged and the misfits.

A central feature was to create a highly supportive learning environment

Such an environment depended on the staff-student relationship being one of trust, friendship and fairly ruthless honesty. The outline of the course identifies these aspects: effective communication, structure and the fostering of personal autonomy. To achieve autonomy, structure is needed to provide guidelines and limits. 'Consequences need to be spelled out to allow the individual to experiment, and, at the same time, maintain a sense of security.' (The interview with the students reported above exemplifies will those elements of the course.)

Drama is a strong element

The course co-ordinator is qualified in psychodrama and all the team attend sessions periodically both as an aid to their personal development and to their capacity to understand and cope with conflict in the lives of their students. Students too are accustomed to acting out conflict situations with exchange of roles, and this helps them to understand their own behaviour and perceive how other people see it.

An integrated learning environment

The concept of integration reaches into all parts of the course. In terms of a learning environment it covers

- Learning to evaluate oneself and be at ease with onself - an essential step in becoming an independent thinking person.
- Learning to set goals and work towards them; establishing priorities and looking at consequences help here.

- Learning to organize - an aspect of taking decisions about their work and behaviour and exploring the consequences.

- The integration and use of knowledge - if the preceding skills are established, the student knows *how* to learn; 'he experiences the power of his own thinking, becomes his own teacher'. (From the course outline.) Furthermore, a model of integration is provided by the team of teachers who run the course. They share the teaching, the planning, the problems; and reading and discussion of ideas makes the course office an ongoing seminar. It is perhaps a significant fact that all of the teachers volunteered to be involved in the course.

A sample phase of work

The project was *Education*. It was planned to extend over several weeks. It began with an assembly of all students (about 100) and a brief outline of how it would be developed through the next 'day out', and subsequently. Then came the real start. Each of the teachers gave a personal narrative account of their education for becoming a teacher. They told of failures, successes, mistakes, accidents and fears. An assembly of 100 was not an occasion for discussion but the students were astonished that their teachers had experienced failure and fear. The next stage was for the students to spend their excursion day in a survey of sample opinions about education gathered from street interviews. On excursion days they meet at 9.30 in their course centre, report to their tutors where they are going and receive instructions whether they are to return to school at 4.00 or go straight home. On this occasion they picked a partner and chose a suburb to work in. They had three questions and planned to interview ten people each. Some excerpts from an interview with four of them illustrates what happened and gives some indication of what they were learning.

Interviewer: *How do you introduce yourselves? What do you say?*

Student 1: *I go up and say, 'Excuse me, I'm from a high school, and I'm doing a survey,' and give the subject, and I say, 'would you like to be interviewed, or would you like to help me with some questions?' Most people say yes.*

Interviewer *How do you pick your victims?*

Student 1: *Pick a stationary person, someone who can't get away.* (*Laughter*)

Student 2: *And you mustn't get all the same age group.*

Interviewer: *Let's get a sample of the replies to the first question - 'What are the most important things you think every child needs to be taught at school or at home?'*

Student 4: *I got 'world economy' from one.*

Student 2: *I got, firstly, to receive education and then mixing with people, understanding life, to learn manners, respect for themselves and others, and to become efficient and good citizens. That was just one person.*

Interviewer: *You would hardly find those on the timetable, would you?*

All together: *No...*

Student 3: *I think most people found manners and discipline are very important ... I got a few people saying responsibility and maths, reading and writing, you know, the basics ...*

Student 2: *I got one lady, and she got very upset, saying children these days only think about one thing ... and, of course, that's sex. She is going on and giving me this lecture on ... We should be taught discipline and maths and science that will make our brains work and create our minds, and I'm standing there ... You get an argument ...*

Student 4: *One guy told me and my partner what was wrong with the Government and ...*

Student 1: *I got one man ... he was talking about how different school was in his day ... like, he had more discipline ...*

Interviewer: *Do you think when all these people spoke about discipline, they were getting at the same sort of thing?*

Student 1: *I always asked the people I interviewed what they meant by manners or discipline or whatever, because one word just sums up everything, and I say, 'What does that consist of?'*

Student 3: *Some people ... I think I got scared of, because ...*

Student 4: *They get carried away.*

The day's interviewing was followed up in various ways, but small-group discussion is always a major part of the process. The range of answers given to the interviewers and how they could be interpreted, how they related to what went on in schools, what the students' own answers to the questions were, what they had learned from doing it and so on - all these provided a rich field of exploration. Meanwhile the data was processed and some skills of sampling taught. Since manners and discipline come out as dominant, the groups settled to the common task of tackling this issue for themselves, first by discussion and then by writing an outline of how manners and discipline might best be incorporated into what is taught at school.

The logic of the exercise was clear, but in the event the writing proved difficult. The issue was too confusing, the students thought, to be written into a programme - really only suitable for discussion.

During this period the students saw two films with an education context - *If*, and a recent film about young adolescents growing up in a city. One of these was shown in the school; for the other an excursion day was used to go to Perth. When films are on the programme each student goes with a duplicated sheet of half a dozen questions to help him reflect about the film afterwards. His comments are then given to his tutor and sometimees used in the follow-up discussions.

The final stage of the project was intended to be a full assembly with some invited outside speakers.

Since the relationship between teachers and students is explicitly a control feature of the course we conclude with excerpts from an interview with three students about the opening session of the project on education.

Interviewer: *I want to ask you about those talks the teachers gave about their own education...*

Student 1: *When the teachers were telling us about their education I felt that we all became a bit closer to the teachers, because ... before that we didn't know what they had to go through. Really we just thought they went to a school and then ... but we found out it was hard; it was harder for them than it is for us now.*

Interviewer: *I remember one told about being frightened a lot of the time.*

Student 3: *A lot of us are frightened of school and teachers because every day you hear nothing but 'You've got to get a job, you've got to get a job, so do this, do that and ...' you end up becoming very frightened. You don't look forward to going to the outside world; You want to run back all the time ... The teachers say, 'You've got to know what you want,' and ... this doesn't help the kids to get confidence in themselves; they just keep running back from it ... That's half the reason why half the kids are here today ... they don't know what they want.*

Interviewer: *Is there anything in this course, do you think, that helps kids to ... feel more confident about the future?*

Student 3: *Yes, the communication between the teachers and the students... They don't force us into anything; they leave us to make decisions, and that's what's made half the students more confident in themselves.*

Student 1: *It's also made things easier to up-grade so we are feeling a lot more confident in ourselves.*

Interviewer: *Is there anything else you would like to say about the course?*

Student 1: *I like it because ... it's ... because of the relationship between the teachers and the students. We are all really close ... we're like really good friends...*

Student 3: *They treat us as equals, whereas in the other school a teacher's a person above you; you're only a student ... A lot of kids want to get to know their teachers but they just can't because teachers are a sort of God image ... In this course, teachers will say they made a mistake, but other teachers won't ...*

Interviewer: *Why do you think that's important?*

Student 3: *I think it's the way they've been conditioned. I think a lot of teachers have been made to think they're very important - and they are - but there's a difference between being helpful important and just being important...*

A NOTE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVE COURSES

The report from the Steering Committee for Alternative Courses says 'they have been evolving in the schools for sometime and by 1978 40% of Departmental senior high schools are offering them'.

The economic situation is making a fourth year at school an alternative to a job, yet most of these students do not see tertiary education as being for them, and many of them would not be capable of it. Thus 'a new dimension has been added to some schools in that the areas offered to students has had to be broadened, and the emphasis changed from an academic focus to a combination of social effectiveness and vocational readiness.' (From the Alternative Courses Newsletter Vol. 1 No. 1.) The Newsletter itself is a straw in the wind. Groups of teachers working in Alternative Courses have been meeting regularly to meet the new situation by exchanging ideas and engaging in their own self-education. For example the course co-ordinator of Special Innovation School No. 2 has been running a course on psychodrama for alternative course teachers. The Newsletter carries the process further, as does the proposed correspondence network between country and metropolitan schools.

It may be an ill wind but teachers are responding to it by providing courses which a lot of students claim to have benefited from. (See the Steering Committee's Survey Ed. Dept 1978.)

SPECIAL INNOVATION SCHOOL NO. 3

METROPOLITAN HIGH SCHOOL

REASONS FOR SELECTION

It is the policy of the Education Department to provide schools of various designs, and although the physical environment of the architecture does not determine the education philosophy of the school, it certainly makes it easier or more difficult for particular learning environments to develop. We included this school as a case study because it was set up as an innovatory *type* of high school (one of a small group of new schools), rather than having this innovation or that developed within the framework of a more traditional type of school.

It was only in its second year of existence at the time of our visits but was intended to become a senior high school serving a developing area some twenty miles from Perth. The aim of developing a school philosophy and policy throughout the whole staff was built in to the architectural briefs and the procedures when the school was set up. The Principal characterized these as 'flexible space and flexible time to cater for flexible learning environments'. In practical terms this meant professional freedom and professional responsibility expressed through staff collaboration; it meant school-based curricula throughout, with ample provision made for time for staff to discuss and plan; it meant the school becoming its own unit of staff education both initially and continuing; and it carried the new feature of open advertisements for posts in the school and a share in the negotiation of appointments by the Principal and senior staff.

Believing as we did that one of the strongest influences on the quality of teaching is the operating constructs of teachers (beliefs and attitudes), we were particularly interested to see what effect a 'flexible' school designed to promote collaboration and thinking among the staff might have on English. The school is built on the slope of a hill and has groups of buildings at ascending levels. Some of the buildings consist of traditional-type classrooms opening out from a large carpeted activity area with adjacent staff rooms, and small seminar or study rooms, thus providing for traditional teaching, group activities and individual or small-group study. Others comprise the science block, the library, the canteen, and an open-space performing arts centre.

FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH THE PRINCIPAL

Flexibility in school structure and organization

We began by discussing the effect that the concepts of flexible space and flexible time had on teaching and learning. He said:

> *When I was developing my philosophy for the school I was always concerned about the use of time, the use of space and the use of people. They were the three points I build around.*
>
> *Take the use of space. This is the first high school where the architecture is such that we can do things that we've talked about for so long and heard about from places around the world.*

> *The way the space is organized really forces staff members to re-think the way they teach the students.*
>
> *Linked with this is the use of time. For years we've been constrained by the 40-minute period. It's been sacrosanct, so the 100-minute 'zone' we're using here was more or less a 'happening' ... The main benefit of the large chunk of time is that it is forcing teachers to stop teaching all the time ... You can't chalk and talk for 100 minutes, so that means the youngsters must be involved in some learning (for themselves) rather than being taught all the time.*

He was, he said, making a distinction between teaching and learning - not assuming that they occur concurrently - and went on to say:

> *You'll need to split your class during this 100-minute period of time so you need space to expand and we have that space ... Typically we have a period of time spent in straight teaching, a period spent in consolidation and a period of time in seminar, tutorial type work. So I see space and time as being interrelated.*

'Flex' days were an extension of this kind of organization. A few days each term were set aside, unprogrammed, for special events, projects, occasions and their purpose designated according to need.

The evolution of a school philosophy: preparation and planning

The Principal made it clear that he thought it naive to suppose that changes in buildings and time allocations for lessons would of themselves produce different kinds of teaching, and went on to unfold a whole web of deliberate procedures designed to realize in practice the development of decision-sharing, co-operative planning and working among the staff, and the growth of non-authoritarian relationships throughout the school.

The first of these steps was the innovatory character of his own appointment as Principal, and of the staff. Instead of the usual pattern of promotion by seniority, open advertisement made all principals and deputy principals free to apply for the headship of the two new-type schools, begun in 1976. Furthermore, each applicant had to submit a written philosophy and aims to the Interview Board and speak to it on interview. 'This', he said, 'forced me to do a lot of re-thinking. Immediately on appointment we joined the selection panel to recommend the appointment of the deputies. These people had also to submit a philosophy and speak to it'. Similar procedures governed the appointment of the rest of the staff. Quotations from the advertisement make clear the aims of the whole operation:

SPECIAL-GROUP HIGH SCHOOLS

Applications are called ... from teachers interested in joining the staff of these two schools...

The architectural brief ... will create the opportunity for the educational programme to break away from the traditional patterns of school organization and student learning as generally understood in Western Australian high schools.

Applicants are expected to have an interest in experimenting with flexible open space areas. They should see their role in the variety of innovative teaching techniques.

Their role, in this open educational climate, will enable them to share in the establishment of school policy and the development of the curriculum. A genuine interest in children, and the ability to participate in instructional programmes beyond the limits of a single subject are essential qualities.

... A brief outline of an educational programme in their subject areas including objectives ... and evaluation should accompany applications...

The Principal said it was widely believed that the staff were 'specially selected'. This was only true in as far as there were different procedures for making the appointments from *those who had chosen to apply*. The significant difference was in the open advertisement describing the aims and requirements of the school, and in the open call for any interested teachers to apply. He thought one disadvantage might be that the school might be accused of enticing good teachers away from other schools, though there was no great rush of applicants for any of the posts. He added that he thought the strength of the school in staffing did not lie in having a team of super teachers - the type in this school was found in every high school - but 'every staff member here wishes to be here, and that's the strength'. Everyone applied voluntarily, *knowing beforehand* something of the aims and hopes for the school.

> *Remember, I mentioned about the use of space and time? The third part of the triangle is the use of people ... I'm convinced that typically, in a hierarchical, authoritarian structure, good staff members work only at a percentage of their potential - about 70% to 80% perhaps. I feel the environment we've managed to develop here where they're released professionally (as you know we share decision-making and that type of thing), in this kind of environment, they explode into action ... Although it's forced me to re-think my role, I've found it just as exciting as they appear to have found it.*

Participation in decision-making: an aspect of school policy

The sharing in decision-making is a reality in all the life of the school. The appointing of new staff is one example ... there is a selection panel of five (to recommend to the Education Department) consisting of the Principal and his two deputies, the senior teacher of the subejct concerned and one member elected from the staff by fellow staff members. The Education Department gives its full support to this procedure.

At the level of day-to-day work things are discussed, planned and settled at meetings - both formal and *ad hoc*. No one could say in this school, 'Here I just get the feeling I am a sort of teacher who teaches, and things get passed down to me, and that's it.' (Case Study No. 6.)

The student involvement in decision-making is procedurally, through the Student Council and in the near future through the High School Council. The Principal was frank about the problems of getting the Student Council working but his experience in a previous school gave him patience to wait for the rewards that he knew would emerge as the school matured.

Staff-student relationships

Interviewer: *I wonder if I could take you a bit further on this. You don't only want to train a core of leaders, do you? You have got an aim for all your children, and this is what has struck me in walking about the place ... I can't tell you the number of children who greeted me, and have spoken to me and asked me things ... so there's something operating in the way this school works which is making it a civilized, talking community for all the children. How has this come about?*

Principal: *That's the hidden curriculum part that is so difficult to explain ... I think it comes from the empathy which exists between staff and students. It's not just a happening; it's deliberate on our part.*

It commences with the choice of staff. The first question asked them is, 'Do you like children?' Are you willing to give extra time to them? If not, to put it bluntly, you aren't the sort of person we want.'

Then some training. Not the original training we undertook in the three months before the school commenced when we all went back to school for a psychology course at Churchlands College, but something is arranged for them ...

Then the next thing is the TAG concept - Tutorial Advisory Group. We asked staff are you willing to be a TAG teacher who is responsible for a group of fifteen to twenty children, but not just in name? Are you willing to be intimately involved with those young people for the next three to five years?

From that, close relationship is deliberately established ... I suppose it's linked with the openness of the architecture and the way we teach ... The children talk to one another and informally teachers a great deal ... The children treat adults as a resource rather than as a teacher, so every adult is treated as a resource. So, as a visitor, you were asked questions and were involved in a natural way by the children.

Community relationships

He went on to say that anything breaking with tradition was at risk through misinterpretation so dissemination of the school ethos was extremely important. They were doing this through their feeder primary schools (one of which was on the same campus), through the parents, and through their ongoing contacts with the community. They had, for instance, just appointed (jointly with the Shire Council) a teacher who was also a part-time community officer. His work was crucial. It was all too easy for the school's focus on an informal non-authoritarian approach to be seen as lack of discipline rather than the learning of self-discipline. Their approach is to handle discipline problems at a low-key level through the teachers who are most in contact with the students concerned, such as TAG tutors and by involving parents at once.

> *I feel it's a new approach to discipline. When I think back on my years as a principal and a teacher, I can see my role as a principal has changed dramatically at this school, deliberately and otherwise.*

FROM THE OBSERVER'S NOTEBOOK

- *After two days in lessons and about the school, students greeted me, offered to carry the tape recorder, etc.*
- *Two male members of staff were washing the tea things at lunch. They have a roster, which includes the Principle.*
- *Attended a staff meeting on 'language across the curriculum' arranged by and opened by the manual arts teacher.*
- *Saw one teacher who did, in fact, talk for 100 minutes!*
- *Attended a 40-minute meeting of staff and teachers from the local primary schools on reading. The speaker was a dynamic from one of the CAEs. Much practical advice, involving parents. For instance: 'turn off the TV for an hour in the evening and all the family read - and be seen to read.'*
- *Attended the daily sustained silent reading session. Impressive.*
- *The staff have begun to take their innovatory school for granted and worry about the shortcomings. Quite right, but they shouldn't lose sight of what they have gained.*
- *Interviewed three students who were cross-tutoring children with reading difficulties in a primary school. One of the 'tutors', aged 14, himself was a slow reader. He said it helped him to help a younger child.*
- *Went with a group of Year 9 students to an improvised play they were doing for Grade 1 in a local primary school. Their perception of how to let the little children join in was astounding.*

From an interview with the two deputies: problems of innovation

Whereas the interview with the Principal had been chiefly descriptive of the innovatory character of the school and of its establishment, our conversation with the deputies centred on the problems of implementing the plans and developing the school along these lines.

They said that

(1) Breaking new ground was always difficult. New ways are often misunderstood; harmful myths grow up, particularly in the early

days of a school. They instanced the difficulty they had had in filling posts. In spite of open advertisement, applications had been few.

Deputy 1: *Advertising in the Education Circular for teachers who have a special contribution or interest is not sufficient ... Apathy is great, I think, and fear of the unknown, fear of possible radical new things. So it's got to be more than open advertisement to make this process of application (and appointment) mean anything.*

(2) The corollary of any innovation is a deliberate programme of teacher education to ensure that the changes are understood. When, as in this case, the new venture is predicated on teacher co-operation, staff development becomes the pivot of the whole thing.

Deputy 2: *Teacher development was always central of our policy, right before the school opened. We had weekly meetings all through the term in readiness for opening ... We had a special weekend workshop (concerned with goal-setting and self-evaluation) and a weekend induction course for this year's new staff and we shall do this again.*

This was the school staff operating as a 'unit of staff development', but they also see themselves as having a role in fostering local in-service education.

Deputy 1: *I've spent a lot of time organizing regional in-service courses like the reading course, and drama in social studies, and one coming up on children at risk ... It's time and money well spent because a teacher teaches children not just the next day, but next year, and the year after that. For instance, my own son's teacher happened to come to our sustained silent reading sessions and a few weeks later my boy said, 'I want a really good book, Mum, for S.S.R.' That was a sort of vindication for me.*

(3) The third problem for an innovatory school was continuity of staff. The two types of high school with two structures for promotion makes continuity so difficult that special arrangements had to be made for this new group of schools.

Deputy 2: *What usually happens with all new schools is that they have a band of senior masters in their first year, then all apply for transfer in their second year to a senior high school to raise their status, so in year two you might have a whole lot of new senior masters. So probably in the first four years of a school's existence you change senior staff twice.*

Deputy 1: *A recipe for disaster, but in this group of schools the acting senior masters appointments are guaranteed for five years ... However, we hope better things will emerge from the Nott report (on promotion).*

ENGLISH IN THE SCHOOL

In a school which was trying to work through mutual understanding and co-operation rather than power, communication was all important. The quality of the relationships within the school community depended on a willingness to talk and listen and respect. In this context, English had a crucial role, and during the second year of the school's existence two of the three English teachers were given leave of absence from school to plan a school-based curriculum which would give practical force to the general policy of the school as well as to subject English. (Other teachers also had similar opportunities for planning.)

The observers. What the observers particularly noticed

- The workshop approach of many of the English activities. The performing arts centre was time-tabled for English and drama and fully used for all sorts of work in English. There was also the big activities area adjacent to the classrooms full of exhibition material, and the small seminar rooms were also used. The mini-bus was used to take groups to the bush or the beach for first-hand experience from which they returned to talk, write or read.

- The work in literature was related to the age of the children (Years 8 and 9) and was integrated to extend into writing and drama. For example, Year 8 students were exploring 'character' through stories and poems, through real interviews, through improvised drama and their own imaginative writing.

- The teachers explained, and discussed with the students, what they were doing, and why, and often invited suggestions from the students to provide a range of options.

The teachers. From the structured interviews with the two English teachers working fully with us

Miss A (Senior English teacher)

Directions in English

I firmly believe that the future of English rests in encouraging the imaginative abilities of children rather than the transactional, because technology is making a lot of the transactional aspects of language redundant ... We're using eighteenth century techniques to prepare for a twenty-first century which we don't know about. That's why I stress the imaginative approach - to make them better able to cope with society ... And talk is the other crucial thing ... Parents worry about letter-writing and spelling but they're not worried at all that their children can't make themselves understood in the spoken language.

Student's thoughts, feelings, opinions and imaginings are the stuff of English. All their experiences are their reality ... and as soon as you separate language and the living thing it's dead and there's nothing happening.

Assessment and grading

How do I deal with their written work? It depends on the objectives I had when I set the work, or the objectives I asked them to have. Because of the BSE I put a mark in my book and on some of the work, but if there was a special audience, I just put my comment, my response, which may be that I enjoyed reading it, or a question after a story about what happened later ...

The comparability test, now - I think it's having too great an influence on what's happening in schools. It is extremely restrictive if you let it be ... It restricts the way I perceive a student and the way that student perceives himself.

Aspects of the green light for 'go-ahead'

Absence of the red light, of course! Freedom from constraints. Two above all: first the freedom to take students along the experience of English which I consider is meaningful for them - to approach a topic in a way and at a time when I think they are ready, not when somebody else tells me it ought to be done.

Second, built-in opportunity, necessity even, to talk over with other people what you are doing, what you think the whole game is about. That's the best.

Mr B

What English should be - poetry, magic and life

My own English teacher had the greatest influence over me - his vivaciousness and obvious joy in working with language and with kids. It just rubbed off, whether he was reading the part of Bottom in 'Midsummer Night's Dream' or laughing at one of us reading the part of Bottom. It was just a sharing of joy thing. That was where literature came alight...

I believe English should be a continuous series of springboards, one idea leading to another idea, and so on ... Every step of the way has to be a constant watching how the class is reacting and leading them, and if you come to dead ends you must stop and try another way...

Then English is about kids being actively involved in every type of language experience that you can possible involve them in ... There are certain transactional skills, I guess, which they need to apply and I guess we need to cover them, but there are at least three years with each kid to do it. Poetry, magic and life - that's what English is about.

How do I regard kids' thoughts, feelings or opinions in English? They are the core. English is the one subject area where the choice of language, choice of poetry, short story can be directly related to their ideas, feelings, opinions, fears, joys, whatever. So it's criminal if English becomes transactional or purely a service subject, because if you do that, you close the last avenue for the human part of the child's development to happen.

Then there's the outside world. We've actually written into the English curriculum that we must use the outside environment a lot more, bring people in, take kids out...

> *About groups ... They are important. Kids talk, share ideas, get to know each other better, have their ideas tested by their peers rather than by the teacher in the role of expert, and especially having the chance to articulate their ideas in different types of language. And there's the skill of being able to work in a group. This has to be learned. I've taught classes elsewhere who had never learned to do it.*

We then went on to discuss the place of student 'choices' and 'intention' in learning. He thought it went a lot deeper than subject options or choosing your own topic from a list. He thought the idea of student participation should inform all you did. He said:

> *Here we have all the alternative learning strategies and we make more than a token gesture towards caring and really understanding what the kids are about. At Summerhill school they had fairly traditional classroom techniques, and really the innovation was the whole caring thing, the love of the child and allowing the child to choose ... The kids didn't go unless they were interested, i.e. motivated from inside, then the lesson was valuable, but the lesson itself was fairly formal. So I don't think kids necessarily learn better because you hit them with jazzy new methods ... I talked with my Year 8s about how many different learning strategies a teacher should employ with a class and they agreed with me that we should try as many different ones as possible, then every kid would have the chance to use the one that suited them best...*

In reply to a question about what part the teachers had in setting the policy for English in the department and in the school he said:

> *It's a non-question. We all have a part in setting everything.*

The students

(1) From an interview with three students in Year 9 about English.

Interviewer: *Since you can all read and write, what do you think your English programme is in aid of?*

Student 1: *You learn to express yourselves, how to read novels better, how to understand why you have conflict, understand more about drama - things like that.*

Student 2: *I think it's to make us more interesting people. If you know more, you're more interesting...*

Interviewer: *What parts of the work in English do you think are most useful to you? It may not be the parts you enjoy most.*

Student 3: *I like it in the group discussion where everybody helps each other.*

Student 1: *Yes, because the teacher can explain it to you and you may half understand it, but if somebody explains it to you, and they are at your peer level, you understand them far more easily.*

Student 1: *And the humdrum of English. You need an occasional lesson - full stops and commas. You do start to forget with all the new interesting things happening ... So it's useful to have an occasional humdrum English lesson.*

Interviewer: *Is there anything you can do now in English that you couldn't do, say, two years ago?*

Student 1: *Have a class discussion.*

Student 2: *I couldn't go to my friends and ask them questions about English. It would seem as if you were cheating to try to get the answer right, but now it's not considered to be cheating. You just want to know.*

Student 3: *I don't know if this is answering the question, but I think the kids and that seem to be more mature, and they want to help you more now. I enjoy it more than ever I have in primary school.*

(2) From an interview with three Year 8 students about English in humanities.
(Note: the students always referred to 'social studies' and 'English'.)

Interviewer: *Do any of the things you're doing in humanities help your English?*

Student 1: *When you're doing learning and acting at the same time it becomes fun.*

Interviewer: *Does the acting and the drama help your own English at all?*

Student 2: *You mightn't be very good at English and in drama you might be fantastic. That might be a different way of expressing how you feel about English.*

Student 3: *And when you do drama you can remember. Like if you're writing something down sooner or later you forget it. But for drama you say I can remember when we did this or that. It's good.*

Interviewer: *Does having to write things down get in the way of what you would like to say?*

Student 3: *Yes, because sometimes when you're doing something you can't really explain it. It's just a feeling that you want to express and in drama you can express your feelings better than you can by writing it on paper.*

Interviewer: *What parts of humanities do you think are most useful to you?*

Student 1: *You could say all of it, because you need to know about poetry, you need to know about English.*

Student 2: *Some people don't want to know about poetry...*

Student 3: *I won't need to know much about English when I go to electronics. I'll just need to know a bit of Latin for signs...*

Student 1: *But you do need English because you've got to know how words fit in everywhere, don't you?*

Student 3 *I mean English like Shakespeare and all that kind of English.*

Student 1: *Well, if the teacher took you away from certain people, then certain people would learn poetry, and certain people would learn other things, and that would be no good for the people learning poetry because they're not learning what the poetry people are learning. So it's better if you all learn together, and then you won't have to worry about missing out on things.*

The argument about poetry rambled on. Student 1 returned to the attack.

Student 1: *You learn about poetry and Shakespeare for the kids in the future that might like to learn about them. You might not like to learn about them, but the kids in the future might like it.*

(3) From an interview with another group of Year 8 students. This group had a long discussion about assessment. They began by talking about presentation.

Student 1: *Sometimes you get marks off for presentation skills, where perhaps what you concentrated on more was the ideas and so on.*

Student 2: *Yes, presentation plays a major part in high school work.*

Interviewer: *Can you discuss your marks with your teachers?*

Student 1: *I've only tried it with one teacher, Mr B.*

Interviewer: *Well, can you discuss it in your TAG (Tutorial Advisory Group) sessions? Is that the sort of thing you discuss there?*

Student 1: *At first we could, but now it's starting to be a very restricting TAG and you can't really speak freely any more.*

Interviewer: *Do you think perhaps you are losing opportunities to talk about how you feel your work is going?*

Student : *Yes, you can write letters for 'High Notes' (school bulletin) if you want to, but that's publicized and it's a bit susceptible to teasing by the kids and that.*

Student 3: *I reckon there should be more information, before you start a topic, on what you'll be marking on, and what sort of things will be appreciated. Afterwards, each child should be individually explained to why he got his or her marks, good or bad.*

We conclude these conversations with Year 8 and 9 students by what one of them said about what he could now do that he couldn't do a couple of years ago.

Student 3: *'Now you're learning more things - you can explain things, things you couldn't explain before. You have a wider variety of words to choose from to describe things and express your feelings about things; instead of just saying I like this and I don't like that, you can say the words why you don't like it.'*

The parents

As in the other schools we visited, we were only able to meet a few parents, and these understood well what the school was trying to do. We quote a few utterances as examples of the kind of understanding among parents that it is hoped to develop more widely through various ways of working with them.

Parent 1: *... How can I say, a lot of what they do is aimed for them to be able to express themselves, communication as well ... I can only go by my own children ... V. has always been quiet and a bit close. A sort of closed book, or he was. But this last couple of months he's beginning to open out. I think it's the school... There again with his written work, because he's somehow talking more, he's been able to express himself more on paper as well...'*

Parent 2: *M. has been through a rough time early on. For medical reasons she couldn't read or spell her own name at the age of seven. She wasn't able to communicate with insiders, let alone outsiders. But since she came to this school, I haven't been able to shut her up ... It's lovely just to hear her after all those years. This type of school, all the teachers here - I've never seen it with the children before ...*

Parent 3: *To me it's building the students' confidence in themselves, personally - that's what's happening here.*

PART III—THE FINDINGS

SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

In this section we try to show what the discussions in Part I about English, about literacy in the secondary school and about examinations, might mean in terms of what goes on in classrooms.

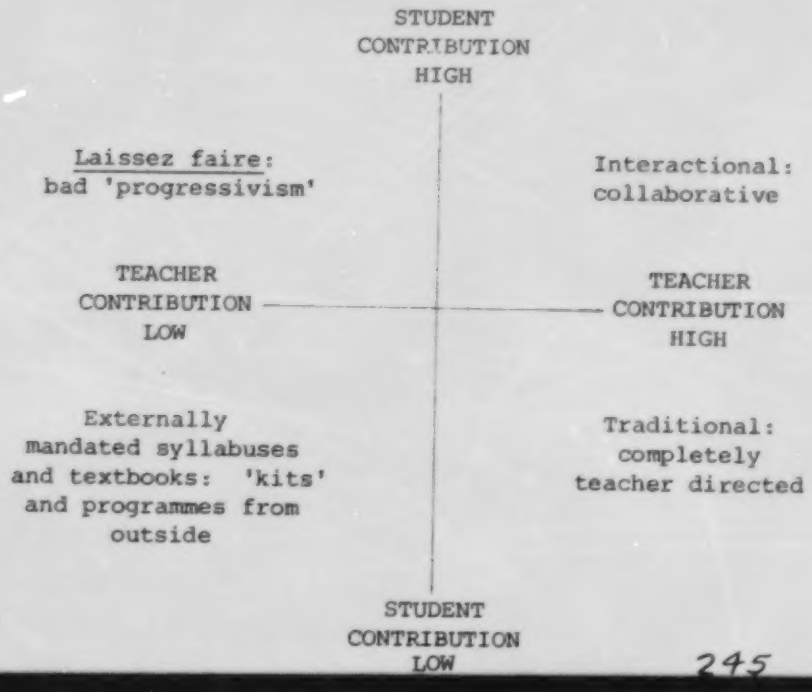
We begin with a diagram which rather simply illustrates the *kind* of teaching and learning that results when the teacher's and students' contribution to decisions about learning are respectively high or low. A teacher can 'place' his own various lessons and activities in the different quadrants, and see, if he wishes to, where his general location as a teacher lies.

We then attempt to 'map' many of the activities which go on, or should go on, in English lessons. This is not a random list, but a unified display which shows the relationship of the various activities one to another within the universe of discourse. We have only had space to include a few examples; teachers will have hundreds more, but we hope the 'map' will help to give an overall view of the possibilities of work in English.

Alongside these outlines of kinds of lesson, and kinds of activities, we then consider the needs of the students who are the learners. We have derived these needs both from the discussion statements in Part I, and from many of the views expressed in the case studies. We have quoted some of these in illustration, together with references to classroom practice.

Finally, we attempt to say, in summary, what we think should be the dominant directions in work in English at the three main levels in schools (primary, lower secondary and upper school) to maintain continuity and development.

Diagram to illustrate the kind of work that results from both the students' and teacher's contributions to decisions about learning. (Bussis, Chittenden & Amarel, 1976.)


STUDENT CONTRIBUTION HIGH
Laissez faire: bad 'progressivism'
Interactional: collaborative
TEACHER CONTRIBUTION LOW
TEACHER CONTRIBUTION HIGH
Externally mandated syllabuses and textbooks: 'kits' and programmes from outside
Traditional: completely teacher directed
STUDENT CONTRIBUTION LOW

MAP OF ACTIVITIES: This is based on the section *What is English?* in Part I.

A

USING FOR REAL OPERATIONS

- for yourself
- for a group
- for the world outside

B

PRACTICE PLAY

- spelling
- punctuation
- presentation in general
- comprehension
- Experimenting, e.g. trying out different beginnings for a story or writing ballads after reading a ballad or limericks even - or Haiku

C

STUDYING LANGUAGE

ad hoc -
(a) in a context of writing and literature
(b) in the context of the various kinds of language they use and meet in school and out of school

RANGE OF ACTIVITIES - UNIFYING FACTORS: A THEME, A TEXT, A PROJECT, AN ASSIGNMENT

For practical purposes, a balance must be achieved over a period of 2-8 weeks of

A1

TALKING AND LISTENING

- Discussion (one to one and in a group)
- Formulating (tentative)
- More public forms: persuading arguing explaining reporting

- To each other
- Tolerance of other's views
- Following an argument
- Abstracting information

A2

READING

- Literature - 'out there' - published (who chooses what?)
- - peers' stories, poems, etc. (sharing, valuing, who chooses what?)
- acceptability of individual response
- Respect for individual choices
- Reading for Information
- Teachers' records show a concern for: readability levels literacy levels

A3

WRITING

Real Operations - therefore - audiences and situations determine

Audiences: the teacher, oneself, other people
Purposes: defined by the situation and the audience.

Poetic

- Stories, poems, plays, film scripts
- Presentation (discussion of language and form of presentation: possible re-drafting)

Expressive

- strictly personal writing, journals and diaries, letters
- personal (or autobiographical) versions of many of the items in the transactional list (according to audience and purpose, eg to entertain and present a personal view);
- Reflective and speculative writing about events or one's own learning

Transactional

- Explanations
- Reports (visits) events, etc.
- Instructions
- Formal letters (invitations, requests, information)
- Notices
- Guide booklet
- Presentation. (Discussion of appropriate language and form of presentation of all of the above items.

Magazines and some group projects, e.g. an entertaining guide to

A4

DRAMA

Aspects

- Putting yourself in someone else's shoes
- Acting out a story
- Having a sense of drama being important without a production

Forms of Activity

- Improvising
- Role-playing
- Acting from a script

THE NEEDS OF THE STUDENTS

The first seven needs listed below seem to us to be those of all young learners. Some are specific for English and some are more general. In addition there are some needs that are relevant to the present situation with its demands for a higher level of literacy and articulateness.

Students need to value what they have to say for themselves and to be valued by others through

- Personal and imaginative writing.
- Talk.
- Drama.

> 'Personal language really concerns me because so much of their personal language, their thinking and their talking relates to their own self-esteem, their own self-awareness ... and I feel that their awareness of themselves and their sensitivity to other people just has to come through that personal language.'
>
> (Teacher interview, Case Study 4)

> 'I value their opinion as their opinion. If I think it's wrong I tell them, but I am marking their English, not their opinion.'
>
> (Senior Master interview, Case Study 5)

> 'If we've decided that talk is essential, then I find that the things that kids talk most freely and easily about are the things that they know about, the things they've thought about before and therefore have ideas on ...'
>
> (Teacher interview, Case Study 2)

Students need to have pride in their work in its more finished form, i.e. in its presentation

> 'It's the sort of care with how things are proposed and how they are presented ... I think the way they actually give it to you and compose it reflects how much pride they take in their work.'
>
> (Teacher interview, Case Study 3)

> 'It's the quality of *presentation* that hits you in this school ... I don't, of course, mean just neatness, though this is part of it. I mean the aesthetic of making something look good with colours and letters and lines and shapes and layout - the lot.'
>
> (Observer's notes, Case Study 3)

> 'When I started writing it I hoped to make my journal more interesting by making it more for public consumption. I suppose I am a person who likes other people knowing what I think about things.'
>
> (Student journal entry, Special Innovation School No.1)

Students need to have choice, i.e. the teacher offering some responsibility for their own learning processes

'I like, with my school kids, to get together to try to work out a unit of work with things that they are interested in, and let them follow their interests too.'

(Teacher interview, Case Study 5)

'I think more than anything else as far as the things I do in the classroom are concerned, the most meaningful things are those which have come out of waiting to see what the kids want to do ... I don't think I've ever had any writing worth a pinch of salt on anything that's my subject and not theirs.'

(Teacher interview, Case Study 4)

(A Year 12 class had been to Perth to visit the Agricultural Show and go to a film.)

'It appeared they had not found much to interest them in the Show but had rapidly made for the fairground section and spent most of their time there. The teacher then took them into a discussion of what they had spent their money on, what they valued in what they did in their leisure time, etc. These matters were discussed in an involved and articulate way.'

(Observer's note, Case Study 2)

Students need to understand the real purpose and perspective of the assessment of their work, i.e. not all work should be assessed in the same way or with some external standard (examination) in mind. Some should not be assessed at all

'I think grading and assessment of student's work tends to kill their enthusiasm and creativity. They seem so willing to please in Year 8, but the inevitable assessments and placements seem to decrease the confidence of the less able students. I can't see a way around it ... I hate doing it (grading) because as soon as you put somebody in basic level their expectations drop.'

(Teacher interview, Case Study 1)

'The school that I was teaching at in Victoria didn't give marks - not in the humanities department, anyway, except at half year and end of year, when the Principal insisted that this should happen. I found it wonderful - kids were writing and talking and taking part in language activities because they wanted to and because they enjoyed it. I found that the things they did seemed more meaningful because they weren't afraid of making mistakes and they saw mistakes quite reasonably as something you learn by not doing something that gets you a bad mark.'

(Teacher interview, Case Study 4)

'I explained to my class that, as I believed assessment could affect the quality of their written response negatively, I would only assess five pieces of work during the term ... My original intention was to tell the class which five pieces would be assessed. They asked instead, that they hand up their best five pieces at the end of term ...'

(From a senior English master's discussion document for the members of the department Special Innovation School No.1.)

Students need to have a sense of what they are using language for and why

- Talking to *share* and learn from each other and for oneself.
- Writing for an *audience* and for a *purpose*.
- Reading for pleasure or for information, or even for practice.

> 'The books that John is making up in the Project Class are good. The kids might take a trip out to May River as a class. Then they write about it. He takes the photographs and puts them on the page and they all do their writing underneath them ... That's the thing that gets them wanting to read ... Also I put up work from *all* the kids on the walls ... not just the best ... and if the kids have a free moment they then go down and read them.'
>
> (Teacher interview, Case Study 3)

> 'I think the only relevant way of teaching English is using it. I don't see any point whatsoever in vocabulary exercises, punctuation exercises and that whole range of so-called important things unless they have some importance and relevance for those who are learning it, and I don't see that learned out of any meaningful context they can be important.
>
> (Teacher interview, Case Study 4)

> School of the Air
> 'Kids are drawn into working co-operatively on stories ..., which they finish individually and send in: These are referred to in the morning 'news' time, and circulated to all the group, i.e. the active, real audience is again a powerful factor.'
>
> (Observer's notes, Case Study 3)

> 'I think that (they are) learning from each other; they're talking to each other ... they're giving each other ideas.'
>
> (Senior Master interview, talking about the benefits of small groups. Case Study 5)

Students need to learn that what can be written or said on one occasion cannot necessarily be written or said on another, i.e. to learn about situation, audience, purpose and how language varies

> '... close attention was given to report-writing. Since there is a farm attached to the Agricultural School, and they spend periods of time working on it, there are plenty of things for them to report on. They struggle to master this skill, just as they struggle to express their ideas orally, because they can see its relevance to their future work.'
>
> (Observer's notes, Case Study 2)

> 'You get your oral work with interviewing the manager in the classroom, then you send Bill Smith over to go and interview him. And he comes back with his chest up and says: "The boss said this to me." You practise using the telephone, writing letters to him. You write a letter of thanks, you find out

what goes on in the factory or whatever. That sort of activity to me is real education.'

(Teacher interview, Case Study 5)

'Because I was so apprehensive and inhibited my first few pieces were very blunt and somewhat similar to a history book ... reading back over what I've written my change from formal, impersonal English to a flowing and natural style is evident ...'

(Student journal entry. Special Innovation School No.1)

Students need to understand the process in which they are involved

- In talk: living with uncertainty and half-formed views.
- In writing: notion of rough draft/finished product: knowing when it matters that something is finished

'I found that with writing regularly, my ability to write improved enormously, not only in the quality of the result but in the ease of actually doing the writing ... I often used my writing as a thought formulating process ... the journal also helped me to understand myself and my place in life. In a very indirect way this better understanding of myself helped me to develop an identity and gain confidence in myself as an individual.'

(Student journal entry. Special Innovation School No.1)

'English teachers are there to encourage their students to be articulate, to question received values, to examine social and moral issues surrounding them and to report on these in language suitable to the depth of the study and the level of the student's maturity.'

(Teacher interview, Case Study 5)

'I want to learn primarily about everything that is going on around. I'd like to learn about the people who write the books, and what the books are. But there are a lot of things that bug you; I don't know quite how to say it ... I dislike the attitude that - I know I'm here to learn and to be educated. No, that's wrong. I know that I'm not here primarily to pass my exam, but really I am ... I'm learning to be more tolerant, to be able to set things out before I say them. I've learned a lot, but I haven't learned anything. I always used to say Shakespeare was just down the drain. Then there was *Othello* and we did it on a record. I enjoyed that so much and it just made me feel all good. I was glad I didn't drop it. And that's the sort of thing I'm learning. Lots of things like that.'

(Student interview, Year 11, Case Study 5)

Students need more experience of sustained silent reading in school

'We made sure that every class spent some time in one of the specially equipped reading-rooms ... When one of our reading teachers left I was able to go to the reading co-ordinator and say, "Here are five people from five different disciplines in the school who have all indicated they're prepared to take over the reading, because they're interested in it".'

(Deputy Principal interview,
Case Study 5)

'The inflexible timetable is now being disintegrated, so you have a choice of eight things you can do during the week, not only six TAE subjects ... Reading for pleasure and reading itself have been included in the list of options ... We have quite a good intake amongst the Year 11s for the reading-for-pleasure bit.'

(Principal interview, Case Study 5)

'As a matter of fact, I've got most of those reading-oriented upper-school options timetabled into the reading room ... The kids get a bit shirty sometimes if the teacher is away and I take them out of the reading room and say, "I'm going to put you in one of the ordinary rooms to be supervised" ... The kids don't like being shut out of the reading-room.'

(Deputy Principal interview,
Case Study 5)

- 'By comparison with listening and writing, reading is seldom a significant classroom activity ... teachers seldom rely on it as a vehicle for learning.
- Classroom reading is fragmentary; short bursts lasting between one and fifteen seconds account for more than 50% of the reading across all subjects.
- Reading in the classroom is rarely reflective.'

(Notes from the British research into
the effective use of reading (Lunzer 1979))

Students need more experience of writing continuous language
(From an interview with three Year 12 students about the value to them of their written assignments)

J. 'Once you overcome the hurdle of actually finding a structure for your poem, essay or whatever, I think the only real way you can assess something is by talking to the author, ascertaining what sort of a gap there is between what the author was trying to put over and what actually comes out of this piece of work - how well it has been presented ...'

M. 'I find myself, when I used to write a journal for one of my English teachers, this was something which virtually started me off writing poetry. I can do that of my own volition now, so even without the assignment, I probably would have written what I had done for the assignment. Frankly, I enjoy it.'

J. 'Its value to me is it got me to sit down and try and write some poetry, which is something I often meant to do, but never got around to it. And it made me understand the poets a lot better; and it taught me a lot about writing as well.'

(Case Study 6)

Students in Years 10, 11 and 12 need more experience of forms of writing and talking relevant 'to the needs and opportunities of language use in society' (Keepes *et al.*, 1977.)

R. 'Our course teaches us, like, when we go out and leave school next year to start working, how life's going to be, how we should treat it.'

C.J. 'How to get a loan for your car ...'

R.G. 'When we leave school, most of us are going to be farmers. If you ever have to speak for your local community, that's when you want to communicate with people. Also most people think farmers are brought up rough; they can't speak, they haven't been taught, and you go out and show them up.'

(From an interview with three Year 12 students doing an agricultural course.)

'On a field day, all the parents come and we show cassettes with a commentary so they get a better insight into what we do here. We do the whole lot, take photos, write the commentary, speak it, everything.'

(Interview, Case Study 2)

'We have a social education programme. It's, oh, sex, drugs, disadvantaged people, political philosophies, religions, all sorts of things. The social education people do the responsibilities of employers and employees. The English staff do interviews and telephone techniques and that sort of stuff, and then the final thrust is the kids applying for a job or going out for a practice interview, and then going out on work experience.'

(Interview with a teacher,
Case Study 6)

IN SUMMARY: CONTINUITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN ENGLISH

There are two aspects of language experience which could serve as guidelines for work in English throughout the years of schooling:

Much experience in school time of reading and writing in their *continuous* forms.

More reliance on *incidental* language learning arising from using language. For instance, more words are learnt through meeting them in actual contexts than from dictionaries or from direct teaching. In practical terms this means more experience of a wide range of talk and reading and writing for actual purposes, and more reflection, and discussion of the outcomes in relation to what they are for and whom they are for.

Given these directions of continuity and development one needs to ask what kind of focus there should be on what the students read and write and talk about.

In the primary school

Young children's modes of processing experience are nearer the expressive arts (dramatic play, drawing, making things and story and poem writing) than they are to explicit statements. Their language and the language of poems and stories are forms of *personal* language - experiences are felt and described from a personal point of view, the difference being that a child's use of language is of necessity personal; the poet and story teller use a personal language from choice. Thus the primary years are the golden age for narrative and poetry, which should be the fount of reading and writing in these years.

The middle years: upper primary and lower secondary

The subjects that make up the school curriculum represent areas of common concern and common knowledge and, in the long run, demand a more impersonal stance on the part of the student. This takes time and has to be learnt. The way in will be through personal writing and reflection on things learnt, together with discussion and practice of different forms of presentation according to the demands of the audience and situation. For some students, interest in written stories may be superseded by practical interests, but personal writing and reflection will provide continuity throughout this move towards more impersonal and formal modes of reading and writing.

In the senior secondary school

These are the examination years and for many are the last years of schooling. Students are faced with increasingly sophisticated demands on their reading and written work, but they are not often asked to reflect consciously on these different demands in language and thought. To quote again from the British student invited to reflect on his work in history and English:

> 'History essays are generally more satisfying because they can earn an A+, whereas in some ways English essays are more satisfying because they express something one has been wanting to say for some time, and the sense of achievement is greater because *transference of ideas from the inexplicit* (or implicit) *to the explicit, intellectual, and cerebral part of the mind is such a difficult and time-consuming process.*'

'The transference of ideas from the inexplicit to the explicit'-is not this what language development in education is all about? And this is what young children cannot do. They must of necessity use the alternative modes of literature - narrative, poetry and dramatic forms. In the senior secondary school both modes need to be kept going in reading and in writing - hence the need for upper-school students to do their own imaginative writing as well as study literature.

Upper-school work in English presents many challenges. We conclude this brief summary by quoting from John Dixon and Margaret Gill. (Dixon & Gill, 1977.)

> 'English in the classics model has lacked the sense of a living culture which students encounter day by day ... What is there besides "Literature" that reflects on and evaluates the current experience of a 17-year old? Television, radio, the press, films, songs and records, meetings on social and political issues, conversations at work and at home, letters to friends and lovers... In the encounters these offer, 17-year olds are learning to build and exchange their perceptions of what living is like, what it portends, what it might contain ... The biggest challenge for us is to make good the relationship between the literature of the past and all these actual encounters.
>
> If we acknowledge this tension in the *young adult* in school, what's called for seems to be a general change in the relationship of teacher and taught; to find ways of working which call on their maturity.'

INNOVATION AND ENGLISH

THE EFFECTS ON ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING OF THE INNOVATIONS TAKING PLACE IN THE THREE SPECIAL INNOVATION SCHOOLS AND OTHERS

Innovation is a broad term and it does not necessarily denote change for the better, though most of the innovations we saw were attempts to put creative thinking into practice.

We made case studies of three schools (special innovation schools, 1, 2 and 3) in order to look at the effects of three kinds of large-scale innovation. In addition we came across a good deal of innovatory work of various kinds in the other schools where we were attempting to make a more comprehensive study of English. We observed that its effectiveness in terms of quality of teaching and of student commitment to learning was closely bound up with other features in the school context. It seems that innovation alone is not enough: like a seedling, it requires nuture and a favourable climate. Without these attendant circumstances an innovation may be taken up as an alternative 'method' or 'technique' and translated into quite other school environments where it often fails to bring the expected results. In what follows we attempt to identify the contextual features that accompanied and assisted the innovations in the special innovation schools.

The special innovation schools

Outstanding in the English Project (S.I. School No. 1), in the alternative course (S.I. School No. 2) and in the whole school in S.I. School No. 3 was what we referred to in *What is English?* as *a changing view of the teaching-learning relationship*. This is basically a non-authoritarian partnership between staff members and students - a relationship of trust and respect in which open talk is a central characteristic. The students in the areas studied in these three schools were articulate and committed to learning. Each individual case study throws up the significance of this changing relationship.

These inter-personal relationships appeared to be much affected by other features in the school environment. The most important of these seemed to be

> #### A high level of co-operation among the teachers concerned
>
> In S.I. School No. 1 for instance, the English staff was a close-knit group of colleagues united through a coherent, jointly developed policy for English. We are not in a position to be able to say how extensive its influence was in the school as a whole, but it was highly influential in the other schools in the Project, where there was active co-operation between teachers of English, social studies, science and mathematics in the high schools, as well as among teachers in the primary schools - including principals.
>
> In S.I. School No. 2 we found an independent alternative course whose students had progressed from being drop-outs to being strongly supportive of their teachers and their course. The six teachers running it worked as a closely integrated team, exchanging ideas, problems and knowledge. The students' work in English was no better and no worse than it was in other subjects. What was significant was their new-found commitment to education, and their willingness to put their experiences and attitudes into words for strangers. Serious talk was a reality to them.

S.I. School No 3 differed from the other two in that the whole school was directed towards developing co-operation inter-personal relationships through its organization and policy - relationships of mutual trust and respect realized in talk. Much of the work that we saw was no better than some that we saw in other schools. What was distinctive was that so many students in this school obviously expected a relationship with their teachers in which they felt free to articulate what mattered to them in their learning. This freedom led them to attempt to express complex ideas which students in a different educational climate abandoned as inexpressible or inappropriate.

A programme of deliberate self-education

In all three schools the teachers concerned believed it necessary to develop their own professional education. In the English Project this took place through the Education Centre by means both of on-going discussions of the outcomes of the Project, and by advice and courses organized with the help of the Education Department. The teachers in the alternative course engaged in their own programme of self-education through planned reading and course attendance. S.I. School No.3 used all resources for their on-going education - internal meetings and local courses organized with the help of the Schools Commission and the Education Department, or by direct contact with teachers in tertiary institutions. Teachers in these three schools were quite explicit about the need for continuing professional education.

Support within the school

Schools are highly organized communities, and innovation may involve changes of various sorts. Administrators, principals and senior staff can give much needed psychological support by being willing to understand what the innovators are trying to do, and also by giving the necessary practical help through flexible administration - bearing in mind, of course, the many demands made by the school as a whole. This, in effect, amounts to professional freedom, and a high degree of professional responsibility to be accepted by the teachers concerned. To recap: the Principal of S.I. School No 3 said that in his experience teachers without a good measure of professional freedom only operated at some 70-80% of their potential.

Some continuity among the staff involved

Teachers move rapidly from school to school in W.A. This means that innovatory practices - if they get started at all - tend to disappear with equal rapidity, unless teachers work as a collaborating group and engage in professional self-education to provide for continuity. Continuity was consciously provided for in S.I. School No 1.

We thought that English was very much a going concern in these schools, but more than this, education seemed to be a going concern. This pinpointed the fact that language and learning are inseparable. Right conditions for talk seemed to be the start of it all. Given those conditions, we saw the teachers leading the students towards a level of thinking, writing and reading which we did not see reached by students in schools with a dominantly authoritarian stance and externally mandated syllabuses and programmes.

Innovations we encountered in other case-study schools

We encountered many. Space only permits mention of two.

The language development scheme in Case Study 5 based on regular reading periods in special reading-rooms, and involving teachers from many subjects other than English

The success of this innovation seemed to be closely related to the following features in the school context:

- A high level of commitment to education among the participating teachers.
- A non-authoritarian relationship between members of staff, senior and junior and a resulting open climate of talk.
- A fair measure of co-operation among the teachers involved through a co-ordinator who is a part-time science teacher, and also through the physical promixity of staff arising from the subject staff-rooms-cum-offices. The school is big (1100 students) and traditional organization could not provide for the levels of co-operation possible in the special innovations schools.
- Understanding and practical support from the school administration.
- Continuity, provided for by the two senior masters of English who had been twenty-five and eight years respectively in the school.
- Financial support for setting up and equipping reading-rooms with books, journals and carpets etc., and of the services of the part time co-ordinator.

The effects on English seemed to be more widespread than the recorded progress in language and learning of those who needed it most; for instance, reading periods in the reading-rooms became something the students were unwilling to miss.

The admission of adult students to TAE classes in Case Study 6

This innovation was in its first year and was the logical outcome of the Principal's view of education and of the school's place in the community. The effect of this innovation was, by its nature, confined to the upper school, though, in indirect ways, the knowledge that adults were joining classes seeped into conversations and directed teachers' attention towards the quality of their own teaching.

The success of the venture so far is indicated in the interviews quoted in Case Study 6. The contextual features associated with this success were:

- A high level of commitment to English, and to literature within English among the teachers concerned.
- A non-authoritarian stance towards upper-school students of whatever age and the resultant open talk.
- No discrimination between the two groups of students.

- Close co-operation between the senior teachers engaged in the work, and mutual respect for individual differences among them.

- Keen interest and support from the Principal.

It may be seen from this summary that some features in the school contexts of innovation were constants and others varied from school to school, but there seems to be enough commonality to make tentative generalizations from the examples. Commitment, co-operative endeavour, non-authoritarian relationships, support from administrators - these recur as positives; but there was also a recurring negative. It seemed to us that the biggest obstacle to the creative endeavour of teachers was the lack of continuity among teaching staff, particularly among young teachers whose energy and idealism could be much more influential were it not diverted, even prevented, by the promotion system.

SOME DETERMINERS OF ENGLISH: SUMMARY OF INFLUENCES

Most of the parents interviewed saw successful English teaching in terms of individual teachers. If they spoke of the school as good, it was because there were a lot of good teachers. We thought it likely that teachers might do better work in some schools than in others, so we set out to examine those features of school life which create the context for teaching and learning English, and which, we thought, would affect the nature of the school experience for both staff and students. It should be helpful to teachers and administrators to know what features in schools and in the educational system were associated with successful teaching of English and might therefore become an object attention for both.

In this summary we have listed the features which emerged from the case studies as influential in English teaching, positively or negatively. They do not correspond exactly to the features we predicted at the outset of the study as likely to be influential - though they overlap a good deal - because those we have listed at the end of the study are those that were *perceived* as influential by the teachers in the case-study schools on the one hand, and by ourselves as observers on the other.

The first group of features is concerned with *teachers as individuals*

- Beliefs and attitudes about teaching and about English.

- Freedom, or lack of freedom, to bring those beliefs and attitudes into action in the classroom.

- Professional development, individual and collective, or the absence of it.

These features are represented in the case studies and are discussed in the preceding section on *Innovation and English*.

The second group is concerned with *conditions in schools*

- Type of school organization which allows or inhibits scope for creative capacities both in the classroom and in collaboration with colleagues.

- The principal's philosophy of education.

- The sum total of interpersonal relations in the school.

- The presence or absence of links with the community (extending beyond the Parents and Citizens' committee) in order to develop consensus about English.

- Continuity of staff.

The third group is concerned with features *in the education system* which bear on all teachers and all schools

The Achievement Certificate.
The comparability tests.
The promotion system for teachers.
The Education Department.

- The effects of the Achievement Certificate and the comparability tests are fully discussed in Part I, and varying views about them appear in the case studies.

- The effects of the current promotion system on continuity and innovation must be noted. References to them appear in the case studies (see No. 2 and No. 5 and S.I. School No. 3). They are also commented on in the section on innovation.

- The Education Department. Any attempt to survey the contexts for English in schools would be incomplete without some reference to the influence of the Education Department. As the sections called *Retrospect* and *Prospect* show, the Department has initiated great changes in the directions of education, and, through its English superintendents, its advisory teachers and its publications has strongly influenced the directions of English teaching; but it seemed to us that further changes initiated from the centre are now creating conditions for a much more widespread development in English. As we have said elsewhere (see *What is English?*) language development is a product of individual and social interaction, so English, by its nature, is particularly sensitive to the contexts in which it is taught and learned. Thus some of the recent policy decisions open up special possibilities for English - for example, the Department's lead in developing school-based curricula, or the establishment of new type flexible high schools with their specific provision for co-operative work and greater professional responsibility. These directions - and there are others too - have implications which are highly relevant to good work in English.

  We are not in a position to say how extensive are the kinds of development we met with in some of the case-study schools but the innovations we saw were being strongly supported by the Department, and it seemed to us that individual teachers and individual schools had opportunities for research and development through the support of the Schools Commission and the Education Department which must be rare in the world today. Although money is short, the understanding and desire to support enterprise in education are there.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOLS WHERE ENGLISH IS SUCCESSFUL

People assess success differently. We use the term here to cover schools where

- Teachers feel free to work in the ways that seem best to them.

- Students enjoy their work in English, or at least pursue their courses willingly.

- Examination results are satisfactory.

- Coherent notions of what English is inform the work.

WHAT MOST OF THE TEACHERS PERCEIVED AS INFLUENTIAL IN SUCCESSFUL ENGLISH TEACHING

Redefining English in terms of student needs

The education system provides, broadly, the same education for all students, terminating in the Achievement Certificate, but we found a growing view that many students are under-achieving, and that more account should be taken of their varying needs. In our sample of schools there were multi-racial classrooms, communities with special life-syles, and some students with clear-cut designs for their future occupations. The case studies describe these varying needs and show what directions English is taking in the process of re-definition.

We first found evidence of this process in the development of school-based curricula, where English, on account of its potential breadth and its role in all learning, had especial strengths. Teachers asked themselves, 'What does this class need now?' and tried to shape their courses accordingly. In some schools the changes were within the framework of the traditional organization of English; in others a big break was made with the traditional content and ways of teaching. The process of re-definition was strongest where the challenge was greatest. As one teacher said, 'In a normal school I don't think I would have been that eager to try things out.'

Professional freedom and responsibility

This was a topic raised in every school visited. Many teachers said it was the single most important factor in successful teaching. The issue was put most strongly by those teachers whose commitment to English was strongest. To quote one senior master of English, 'I'm quite convinced that, with English teaching, it's your own enthusiasm which is important. You've got to give teachers room to move and use their own enthusiasms'.

The corollary of such freedom is a share in the responsibility for decision-making and for the outcomes. It was a characteristic of schools where English was most successful that there was professional freedom and responsibility.

Furthermore, professional responsibility extends in various directions. Where it was strongest in the case-study schools it was expressed, for instance, in an awareness of the need for further professional education, or for making links with primary schools, or for tackling current issues such as the development of language across the curriculum; but this notion of *co-operative* professional responsibility was rare.

The importance of talk and its dependence on a changing teaching-learning relationship

Many of the teachers recognized that talk depends on open, non-authoritarian relationships. This was particularly true of upper-school work, and found expression in the value given to discussion and in some schools to dramatic work. There was still a preponderance of class discussion which puts severe limits on the 'moment-by-moment shaping at the point of utterance', but a sense of the value of discussion was there. In other schools small-group discussion was built into many lessons; and overall, there was a sense of the value of talk, particularly between students and teachers in all the snatched-at moments both in and out of lessons. This changing relationship between students and teachers is beginning to be part of whole schools, not just of English departments, and is therefore affected by the pattern of school organization and the interpersonal relations possible within that organization.

The principal

The accounts the principals gave of their aims for the school and the educational philosophy that lay behind it made it very clear that the directions of the school are strongly influenced by the principal.

Moreover, the conversations with the teachers showed that their happiness and success are closely related to these directions. This emerged most clearly in the smaller schools. In the larger schools, the senior staff, particularly the senior master of English, exerted the most influence on English, though the indirect effect of the general policy of the school was always powerful in the background. In some schools the hierarchy of principal and senior staff was felt as a constraining influence; in others where consultation was a feature, the teachers felt their professional skills and knowledge were respected and given scope.

WHAT ONLY A FEW OF THE TEACHERS PERCEIVED AS IMPORTANT IN SUCCESSFUL ENGLISH TEACHING

'A coherent view of what English is, enmeshed with strategies of teaching which are true to language as it actually functions.' (From a teacher's submission to NCET, quoted in Part I.)

A coherent view of English teaching was not seen as important in our schools, although it is at the heart of the description of English in Part I. We found little sense of the need to clear up the lack of consensus about what English is. A kind of anarchy is taken for granted. Students see English as punctuation, spelling and grammar; reading means practising reading; literature is books you read in literature lessons. Somewhere outside school are books and magazines you read for yourself (which are different from 'literature' and 'reading'); parallel but unconnected are drama and creative writing. This, of course, is a parody. In the case-study schools we saw much successful work involving discussion, assignment writing for projects, English based on outside activities, creative writing, film making and more; but the very success of these aspects of the work masked the fact that, alongside these activities, was going on a great deal of what can only be described as 'busy work' quite unrelated to the 'actual functions of language', or to what is known about its development.

We found evidence of this also in the files of written work. Generally there was twice as much (or more) of miscellaneous exercises as there was of continuous writing. Quite simply, students were not getting enough opportunity to bring thought and language together in continuous writing.

Evidence came too from the widely used textbooks which the exercises came from. Going beyond our particular schools, we found the sales figures for these kinds of textbooks gave an alarming picture of the amount of time that must be spent on them.

We asked the teachers we worked with if they could estimate the proportion of time they gave to exercises as against *using* language in its continuous forms, particularly writing and reading. Most estimated a 50-50 proportion. In only one school was there a unified view of English resulting in a policy hammered out among department members, and explained to the students. Staff and students alike knew why they were doing what they were doing. This had happened because the English department had made itself a unit of staff development and were therefore able to base their policy on knowledge of language, its various functions and the place of literature within it.

While variety of English activities is an aspect of successful teaching, such variety needs to be related to the central purposes of talking, reading and writing. It seems that in many schools at least half the work is not so related - and the need for this is not seen as important.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In fulfilment of our brief we have looked at English in the different settings of nine schools, and have attempted to identify those features in the school environments which seem most to affect English teaching and learning. Our conclusions and recommendations are therefore concerned both with English and also with the environments which foster it. We think it will help administrators, principals and teachers to see various features in the school contexts as aspects of successful teaching, and to strengthen these.

INFLUENCES WITHIN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AS A WHOLE

We found that two features in the educational system as a whole had an overriding influence.

External moderation and examination procedures

Comparability tests

- The current system of external monitoring of student achievement levels according to pre-determined norms was achieved as an interim measure. It has now served its purpose and should be discontinued.
- If any State-wide monitoring is thought desirable, it should be by sampling, and should therefore not appear in any one school more frequently than, say, every three or four years.
- Individual schools should, from time to time, in conjunction with advisory officers from the Education Department, engage in school-based monitoring of the levels of reading, using available instruments as advised by the Research Branch. Such monitoring should be undertaken as an occasional operation when changes in the school situation suggest it might be necessary; it should not be seen as a regular routine.

Achievement Certificate

Currently student results are largely determined by the comparability tests taken in Years 9 and/or 8 and/or 10. The moderators have an important role (which should be developed) in mediating both the mechanical operating of the pre-determined norms and the variations in teachers' grades. We consider that teacher assessment and extended moderation should replace that part of the Achievement Certificate now determined by the comparability tests, and should cover the whole examination.

Tertiary Admissions Examinations

At present all students have to take written papers in English or in literature (or they may take both). These options should be retained. The choices allow for courses of study appropriate to different levels and interests within the field of English. As things stand English includes literature but is not dominated by the literary critical essay, which is a difficult technique appropriate only to those going on to read English at university. It figures strongly in the Literature paper. Were there only one subject - English - the literary essay would be there perforce, and students whose interests and talents lie elsewhere would have to master what is, for them, a useless technique instead of broadening their reading and writing.

Alternative courses

Alternative courses should be geared to *appropriate* and *variable* assessment schemes carrying a BSE award. If diversity of programmes relating to diversity of student needs are to be developed, the certificate award must reflect this diversity. The current concept that all students take the same examination needs to be replaced by the concept of comparability achieved through moderation, files of course work, and consultation between moderators and teachers.

The promotion system for teachers

The case studies revealed the powerful adverse effects of the promotion system on work in English. We realize that promotion is a matter that does not lie wholly within the province of the Education Department. We recommend that strong representations should be made to the Teachers' Union negotiators with regard to the present ill effects on

- Teacher initiative in innovation.
- Teachers' interest in developing areas of student need which at present lie outside the promotion ladder - for example developing work with less-able students at Year 10 or with gifted students at Year 8.
- The development and continuity of school policies for English.

INFLUENCES WITHIN THE CONTEXTS OF INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS

Outstanding were the effects of innovation. We had not predicted this. We found innovation generated excitement, energy, thought, self-examination among those engaged in it; but significantly it worked more widely, and indirectly established a school climate in which these psychological features were caught by others not directly involved.

The innovations began from the initiative and commitment of individual teachers or, more significantly, from a group of teachers, but depended on their seeking and being accorded *professional freedom and responsibility*. This in turn depended on *understanding and support* from the Education Department and the school administration. Such *school support* necessarily includes a fair measure of *flexibility* in the *school organization*.

However, such favourable conditions within the school were only part of the picture. We would emphasize in the strongest possible terms the value of the Schools Commission grants in their effects on teacher initiative and responsibility, and the consequent effects on students. Our evidence comes from a number of schools. There was the reading scheme in School No.5 with the equipping of reading-rooms, purchase of materials and provision of a part-time co-ordinator. The effect of an experiment on this scale was to create an understanding of language development in the staff generally. There was the video pool in School No.4 set up for the benefit of a group of neighbouring schools. There was the funding of the teacher research project and the education centre in Special Innovation School No.1. There was the release of teachers for curriculum development in Special Innovation School No.3, and the funding - through local committees - of local meetings and courses which we encountered in Schools 2, 3 and Special Innovation School No. 3. At the other end of the scale there was the funding of centrally organized in-service courses concerned with reinforcing these directions - school-based curriculum, language and learning and heterogeneity. We think these innovations - and others not described - demonstrate a growth in professional freedom and responsibility which suggests that the recommended changes in the external examination system (other than TAE) would be viable.

Within the general context of the school we found that innovations made by individual teachers had little effect beyond that of the teacher concerned (which is not to denigrate individual efforts; sometimes the school climate permits of nothing more), whereas a group of teachers co-operating produced results that were qualitatively different from anything achieved by an individual teacher. (See the case studies of all three special innovation schools.) An important side effect of such co-operative work was that in planning, reviewing and exchanging ideas the teachers were extending each other professionally.

A practical condition for such co-operative endeavour is a *place and a time to meet* - both specific occasions for specific purposes, and for continuing an *ad hoc* contact. Both are important, but we found that where innovation was dependent on informal, *ad hoc* contact it achieved far less. School organization and timetabling prevented it. We suggest

> Deliberate organization is needed to create understanding of the purposes and results of innovations and to allow its effects to permeate.
>
> Principals and deputy principals of schools should give serious and sustained consideration to the effects that school contexts can have on teaching.
>
> Heads of English departments should arrange that department meetings include discussion of educational matters and are not solely concerned with details of department administration.
>
> Priority should be given to department meetings. The extent to which teachers saw them as important varied a great deal.
>
> English should have a departmental centre large enough to accommodate all those who teach English, and to house teaching material and books. This would provide the essential factor determining contact, co-operation and exchange of ideas.
>
> Most of the teachers we met lacked a room of their own where they could exhibit work, mount displays, etc. English should receive the same consideration as other subjects and as far as possible every teacher with a full programme of English should have either his own teaching room or a departmental teaching base where the activities and products of work in English are available.

INFLUENCES OF CONTEMPORARY NEEDS: THE STUDENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

The need for increased literacy

Recent research studies as well as public demand have emphasized the importance of reading (Donaldson 1978). The other side of literacy - writing - has been relatively neglected as a thought product, attention having been almost exclusively focused on the skills aspects. With regard to

Writing

- We suggest that more time should be allotted to writing in continuous language, and less time to fragmented exercises. Teachers should examine the proportion of time they spend on each and see that their students have enough experience of writing for specific purposes and audiences to develop confidence in extended writing.

- A student's progress as a writer depends on his intentions. Teachers should aim at developing these and then work on the appropriate techniques. We observed the value of assignments in allowing scope for intentions and flexibility with regard to the occasions when they were written. We recommend a greater use of assignments at all levels.

- There should be some opportunities for students to write pieces which will be read and the *contents* discussed with their teacher, but not assessed and graded. Many students write the minimum to avoid errors in presentation. If they are to develop their writing as an instrument of thought they need some opportunities to write wherein exploration of thought and language will not be penalized. It should be made clear to them whether their writing is to be given a mark or to be read and discussed.

Reading

- We noted that a recent study of reading in the U.K. (Lunzer and Gardner, 1979) showed that very little time in secondary schools was given to silent reading and that teachers on the whole did not regard it as an effective way of learning. With some notable exceptions we found this to be the case also in the high schools we visited. We suggest that the experiments in which a regular time is given for reading in special reading-rooms or other designated places should be more widely tried. This would also involve the availability of a wide range of magazines, journals and paperback books unrelated to school programmes.

- We observed the apparent success of experiments with the 'Project' class of mainly Aboriginal students in School No.3, which relied entirely on incidental learning arising from an environment which was full of small items of written and printed language in context of visual objects, all these being a part of other active operations. Diagnostic tests showed a marked increase in the levels of reading. We are not in a position to recommend, but we observe that in this school there has been a shift of direction away from direct instruction towards engagement in operations of which reading is a part.

The economic situation with poor employment prospects for school leavers

Schools that have adapted to these external pressures are broadening the base of the education provided in order to meet varying student needs. These changes include alternative courses, work experience, pre-vocational courses and opportunities for students to raise their grades in fresh contexts. This broadening base should provide a wider field for all sorts of discussion and writing in English, both practical and personal. We suggest that discussion with students about what they need to be able to do in language in the contexts of these changes in the school would engage teachers and students in more realistic activities.

The school in the community

- Traditionally schools have worked in isolation from the community in which they are located and, although the idea of community schools has been in existence for a long time, it has not taken root widely. Pressure of external circumstances is beginning to break down the isolation. Particularly in rural areas with few job opportunities, no provision for students to stay on at school after 15 and no technical or further education colleges, the need for schools to become community colleges seems paramount. In a time of financial stringency they would have to draw on local talent for planning, teaching and running. The new regional organization could make such developments a reality.

- The beneficial effects of community involvement in many aspects of school life were observable in School No 6. We think that schools should make strenuous efforts to involve members of the community in all sorts of ways - the High School Council, as students in Years 11 and 12, as speakers to students at all levels, as co-operators in projects, etc., etc.

THE EFFECTS OF LACK OF CONSENSUS ABOUT ENGLISH

Lack of consensus means lack of a theoretical base for work in English. It is generally seen as a collection of separate skills. Its central role as a medium and means of learning is not recognized. This has resulted

- Among teachers in a great deal of 'busy work' - 'skills' exercises unrelated to purposeful uses of language.

- Among parents and public in a demand for skills without an understanding of the extended aims which these skills should serve.

- Among students in a corresponding confusion. English appears to them to be a subject of little practical use.

A long-term project is needed from the Education Department to try to alter this situation. *The heart of the matter is the concept of learning through language.*

- The language-and-learning unit should be retained in order to keep a constant focus on this central aspect of language development.

- The notion that language development is a central aspect of all school learning should be a focus in educational conferences at at all levels, especially among principals, heads of departments in all subjects and superintendents and advisory teachers of all subjects.

- Meetings between English officers of the Education Department and persons in the higher echelons of the staff of tertiary institutions should be initiated to discuss the need for some study of language in education as a part of English studies in the training of teachers.

- The English Teachers' Association should be persuaded to give its attention to this matter.

- Schools that set out to develop their own curriculum for English should be seen as a focus for the development of ideas which would have repercussions beyond the school.

- A school-based curriculum should be supported by knowledge of what others are doing, by a programme of professional reading, and by opportunities to discuss and plan with an education officer.

- We would recommend as part of this long-term operation the institution of a small number of 'professional days' (up to three perhaps, in the course of a year as in some provinces of Canada). The school would be closed to students and used by the teachers for various ways of furthering their professional education. This might take the form of departmental discussions with a visiting speaker, a day workshop, visits to other schools, etc.

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT IN ENGLISH

In the case-study schools very few teachers made any reference to anything they had learned from in-service courses, yet in the schools where successful innovations were being made the teachers referred explicitly to the ideas and concepts on which they based their work. 'People generate ideas for themselves in the process of solving their problems so that what they learn from courses is something quite different from what the educators set out to teach. What each individual learns is determined according to the anxieties and problems that presently occupy his mind.' (Boomer, 1973.) Thus it would seem that the connection between ideas presented (out of context) at courses or in books is, by most people, only made explicit to themselves when they are personally committed to, and in control of, their own experiments at classroom level.

If this is true it has implications for in-service education. Central education officers would have a dual role - firstly as facilitators, and secondly as disseminators of the latest, most powerful ideas.

As facilitators they would assist by every possible means the growth of local initiative with the aim that every school should become a unit of staff education, with the school itself being seen as an in-service education centre. They could then leave on-going matters of English teaching to teachers in the schools.

As disseminators of ideas they could then focus on initiating centrally organized courses concerned with aspects of English which depend upon new ideas or knowledge. Knowledge about language in learning is a case in point, and the significance of school environments in successful teaching is another.

With regard to the kind of courses which may prove most effective, experience in both the U.K. and Australia suggests the following:

- Short-term, one-off occasions are of little value (e.g. a visiting speaker to a whole school staff).

- Longer courses are more effective than shorter ones, provided the agenda is not too crowded. For ideas to take hold, time is needed, and the opportunity then and there to discuss in small groups the meaning and the implications. In any courses as much time should be allocated to discussion of the input as to the input itself.

- It is best if the programme is pre-planned in conjunction with the teachers attending, and if possible these teachers should provide some of the discussion material.

- Experience from the U.K. showed that most impact was achieved where the course speakers were supported by speakers coming direct from schools. We strongly recommend that course organizers, wherever possible, draw on local teachers as well as outside speakers.

- In a time of financial stringency, particularly in rural areas, the concept - and practice - of teachers teaching other teachers could make possible developments that would otherwise have to be abandoned. The regional organization described by the Director-General of Education in 'Prospect' already notes the possibility of drawing on local principals for part-time advisory work. We think that this practice should be developed more fully to include able and experienced teachers at all levels.

- In the long term, and when financial considerations permit, the development of education centres would greatly strengthen both local and central in-service education. They would function as resource centres and venues, and above all provide these opportunities for professional contact among teachers from a spectrum of schools - opportunities which are at present very sparse. Since their inception in Britain in 1973, education centres have become widespread and the range of local in-service activities that has resulted has been far greater than anyone predicted. With falling school enrolments, disused schools, or parts of schools still in use refurbished for new functions, offered obvious opportunities.

DISSEMINATION: A TENTATIVE RECOMMENDATION

We found the teachers in the case-study schools had little knowledge of, but much interest in, what other schools were doing. We think both local communities and teachers would benefit from a wider knowledge of what is going on in schools. English is a central topic and much about it would be of interest to an already involved public if it were written in normal English devoid of educational jargon. Many teachers mentioned articles that had appeared in *Backchat*, so an audience of English teachers is already established.

We think *Backchat*, re-vamped, could serve a broader purpose. It should be no bigger but be written with a lay audience in mind, and with the intention of capturing a sense of 'what it was like to be there'. It should include contributions from students and parents in the form of interviews, and possibly also items from students - not literary pieces but expressions of views such as those contained in the interviews with students in Case Study 6, for example. In general its content would be primarily relevant to those interested in language development, but already more people than English teachers understand its broad relevance. Enough copies should go to schools to be circulated to more members of staff than the English teachers, and to be taken home by students for their parents to read.

LOOKING FORWARD

Recommendations made in the context of a report such as this must be practical, but in spending six months in the schools and six months assimilating the meaning of these experiences, a perspective begins to form of the possibilities inherent in what the observers and the teachers saw as the condition of English teaching and learning.

In 1974, in his 'Perspective of the Seventies', John Dixon wrote,

> *I suppose the major change which I'm still immersed in, struggling to clarify, is part of the spirit of the age. It's not confined to English teaching at all - that's just one microcosm of a far wider struggle. It's about teacher and learner, parent and child, manager and worker. About the dilemmas of coercive authority and inescapable subordination. In the last eight years social consciousness of these dilemmas has spread, in an uneasy awakening. Listening to myself and to others in discussion with students I recognize again and again how prone the teacher is to use his language to dominate and constrict. If we doubt we have only to tape record any run-of-the-mill lesson. The facts are there.*
>
> *After the second international seminar (York 1971) we had to think about 'the teacher as listener, about our responses to what students had to say, about the possibility of sharing the role of learner, about students initiatives ...' Tapes had been available which seemed to show that, given a chance to talk among themselves, students made unexpected progress. They talked in their own terms. And this threw into relief quite unsuspected processes of feeling and thought, which class discussion dominated by the teacher's language had obliterated. Is the polarity real? I think probably not ... There were roles we had to abandon, and others we had to discover.*

This was written in 1974. Five years later it seems to me that these perspectives are more sharply delineated - the polarity quite clear against a background in which many of the traditional role distinctions are becoming blurred; and this is happening in society irrespective of the schools. The notion of a school as an institution where children (not adults) go for limited periods is becoming modified by the concept of education expressed, for example in Case Study No.6. Learners may be any age here. Again, the notion of who teaches whom (or what a teacher is) is becoming blurred by the participation of members of the community in schools, by students teaching other students and by notions of teachers and students sharing the role of teacher in collaborative learning. The distinction between children and adults is less clear - people say 'Children grow up much faster than they used to.'

Alongside this view of learning another of an opposite kind has gained strength. Stenhouse characterized the two models as 'input' and 'output' models (Stenhouse, 1975). The output model is based on the defining of specific behavioural objectives (outputs) and measures success by the efficiency with which these specific objectives are achieved - efficiency here being related to cost. Concern is with the product. In the input model the learning outcomes are only generally predicted and concern is with the *process* of learning. The quality of the input is essential; pre-planned and specific input forms a basis for learning, but does not limit the outcomes.

The relative merits of the two models have dominated curriculum debate in North America since the 60s (Stenhouse, 1970) and will in one way or another reach out to other countries. At this stage one can say that while those aspects of learning comprising skills and information and some problem - solving seem amenable to being defined and tested in terms of behavioural objectives, the question of the development of thinking is where the battle lines are drawn. Stenhouse (and others) envisages knowledge as induction into thought systems and therefore sees knowledge 'as a structure to sustain creative thought and provide a framework for judgement'. (Stenhouse, 1975.) In illustration, he characterizes Bruner's *Man, a Course of Study* (Bruner, 1965) as a 'process' model founded on the idea that knowledge must be speculative and thus indeterminate as to student outcome if it is to be worth while. In short, he says, 'education as induction into knowledge is successful to the extent that it makes the behavioural outcomes of the students unpredictable.'

The humanities (including subject English) comprise the full spectrum from the beginning skills of reading and writing to induction into the thought systems of literature and history. It is therefore important to differentiate those aspects which are amenable to behavioural objectives and those which are not. I think that as consensus about what English is develops, it will become possible to reconcile both goals - the goal for every student to reach a satisfactory level of mastery (output model) and the goal of every student developing his unique potential (input model).

Furthermore, it seems to me that part of the perspective that John Dixon perceived is now beginning to crystallize round the place that the learner's 'intentions' play in his commitment and effort (Bruner, 1975). Schools have traditionally been dominated by teachers' intentions but where teacher-student relationships are changing in the direction of collaborative learning (as in all three of the special innovation schools) scope for mutual intentions is growing (Martin, 1979). This is particularly important in the development of writing abilities (Britton, 1979) and of reading for independent thinking. The limited objectives of the output model would, of course, prevent the development of students' learning intentions and the growth of creative thinking.

So there are the skills of language use, and the information - not a great part of English - and the transformations of 'experience into words' which provide what the students write and what they read. Although not yet a coherent whole, these elements are beginning to come together in the notions of a universe of discourse. Models of discourse (spoken and written) based on the realities of audience and function have brought school uses of language into the same 'universe' as language outside school. The 'literature' that students write (stories, poems and plays) has the same function, but not the same quality or influence, as the literature written by established writers. Moreover, the new reprographic technology has made it possible for every writer to have a reader. 'It is not too difficult to imagine a situation in which much of the 'learning-to-read' material is produced by the students themselves and other members of the community.' (Worpole, 1973.) The realities of a real function and a readership could transform the development of 'secondary' literacy. But alternative views will see English as an academic study with a focus on knowledge of grammar and knowledge *about* literature. I think the polarity may become sharper before it is resolved.

And what of literature? Garth Boomer suggests that the 1980s will generate polemics on the place and value of literature, and on a wider scale the position of English itself as a separate subject in the curriculum (Boomer, 1978). I think the stage could be set for a renaissance if the potential of school writers and readers is realized through the former of the two directions outlined above. Much rests with English teachers to see their role not only as handmaidens of other subjects, but as active disseminators of the voice of literature 'in the conversation of mankind' (Oakeshott, 1959). Garth Boomer expresses my view when he says:

> *I see a re-interpretation of the role of literature in society ... Teachers will understand that a reading in literature is a reading in ourselves, which indirectly helps us to read the world we live in. Where there used to be a petty debate about literary quality, there will be instead debate about the values and attitudes and ways of seeing the world inherent in a piece of literature, or a*

> *folk story or a song. The searchlight of literature will play over the myths of contemporary society, and the past will be brought into dialogue with the present.*

In the long run these changes rest with the teachers. There can be no educational development without teacher development. I think that the effects of co-operative working on those engaged in it is likely to be the most powerful means of self-education, and thereby of the development of English teaching and learning.

Finally there is the shadow of the microchip technology and its impact on the schools. At present we don't see beyond the need to improve students' basic skills in order for them to compete for jobs. It has to be more than this. A narrowly vocational education won't be enough. It may be that we need an extension of polytechnical education applied to individuals, with the creative arts as a strong component.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE TO TEACHERS CO-ORDINATING ENGLISH WITHIN A SCHOOL

At the beginning of this project a questionnaire was sent to all senior high, high and district high schools. It was addressed through the principal to 'the teacher in charge of English' and asked questions about school size, resources and organization. The covering letter invited schools to participate in further stages of this study.

Ninety-three schools returned the completed questionnaire. This represents a return rate of approximately seventy-five per cent. The detailed results are shown in the tables that follow. The points below describe and comment on aspects of particular interest.

THE TEACHER

Experience. The bulk of the teachers (81%) and students (86%) of English are in senior high schools with the more experienced and longer-trained teachers. Almost all of the Year 12 students (99%) are in senior highs. In Class I district high schools, 40% of the English teachers have taught for less than one year, and 83% have taught five years or less. The comparative figures for the senior high schools are 12% and 58% respectively.

While the problem of teaching in isolated rural schools is recognized, there is great need for at least one experienced teacher in each rural school. Furthermore, induction courses for beginning teachers allocated to isolated schools would seem to be a priority.

Qualifications. In senior high schools 10% of the teachers have English honours degrees, or better. The comparative figure for the high schools is 2% and district highs have no teachers with these qualifications. In fact, 26% of English teachers in Class II district highs have only an English minor in a Teachers' Certificate. This compares with 9% in senior highs.

While length of training does not necessarily correlete with teaching ability, and the enthusiasm and new ideas of beginning teachers are acknowledged, an English minor provides minimal background for teaching English.

The unity of work in English. 70% of English teachers in senior high schools teach English full-time compared with only 8% in Class II district highs. Fifty-one per cent of English teachers in Class II district highs teach only one class of English. This compares with 15% of senior high school teachers. These figures reflect different patterns of organization. Class teaching (as distinct from subject teaching) is thought by some to provide a more integrated learning experience. A more disturbing picture is presented in Table 18. This shows that in senior high schools 66 classes *are taught by more than one teacher*, and 20 in high and district high schools.

Professional participation in the directions of English. The division of background, experience and school organization of the subject is further illustrated by the fact that, of the English teachers in professional committees to do with English, 74% come from senior highs and 16% from highs, and of the English teachers in professional English associations, 91% come from senior highs. This represents 29% of English teachers in senior highs. The comparative figures for highs and Class II district highs are 10% and 8%. No district high school subscribed to any professional English teachers' journal, whereas about half of the senior highs and a third of the highs subscribed at least to one. These figures are also disturbing.

RESOURCES FOR ENGLISH

Within the schools

Resources. The schools seemed generally to have a fair range of resources and materials. Almost all schools have separate reading collections for English students; about one-third have a bookshop. Thirty-four per cent had a place designated for drama. A wide range of audio-visual equipment was available *in the schools*, but the great value of tape recorders to English teachers suggests that they should be part of the equipment of every *English department*. Only just over a quarter of the schools had reprographic facilities. Absence of these facilities can prevent much good work in English.

A physical focus for English. While almost all the high and district high schools had their own rooms for English, only half the senior high schools had this facility. In all, only 35% had a departmental staff-room, 41% an English office, and 45% an English store-room. Few district high schools had any of these.

Both for contact between English teachers and for the storing availability and reproduction of materials, English needs a centre. Some of the senior highs are organized to provide this, but they tend to be hampered by room-changing, which prevents exhibition of written and visual materials. English, not less than science, needs its own 'workshop'.

Outside the schools

Regional resource centres. While 70% of the teachers said they had reasonable access to regional resource centres, 52% were uncertain about the appropriateness of the centre resources for English, or thought them inappropriate. Our recommendations stress the need for their development, especially in rural centres.

THE STUDENTS

The testing of reading attainment and use of tests. Most of the schools test all students in reading in Year 8, and then some students in Years 9 and 10; however, some schools test all students each year. Most of the schools use the reading-test results for guidance counselling and planning remedial courses.

Provision for students with special difficulties. The most common (78%) remedial approach for students with special difficulties is the withdrawal of small groups for specific purposes. Large numbers of schools (46%) indicated that they had no special provision for students needing special attention beyond the classroom teacher's normal help.

Teachers' attendance at courses relevant to students with language difficulties. Only five teachers indicated recent in-service experience with English as a second language. In comparison, 111 teachers had been to a course on practical drama, 110 to one on language and learning, and 60 to one on programming. There were no significant differences between in-service experiences across school types. The number of in-service courses on English as a second language contrasted with a figure of 5 153 students stated as having language problems. Forty-eight teachers attended courses on remedial English.

BASIS OF STUDENT GROUPS

Most schools form classes for Years 8 to 10 with mixed-ability grouping over the whole school's ability range. Many schools (35) stream students in Year 10, and most schools form groups by course of option for Years 11 and 12.

CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING

Most schools indicated that they have a written English policy which was decided by the teachers as a group. Similarly most schools claim that their curriculum decisions are group staff decisions. However, many schools stated that their curriculum was significantly influenced by centrally issued syllabuses for Years 11 and 12.

TABLE 1 : ENGLISH STAFF AND STUDENT NUMBERS

SCHOOLS		STUDENTS						TEACHERS		
TYPE	No.	Y.8	Y.9	Y.10	Y.11	Y.12	TOTAL	No.	T/Sch	Sts/T
Senior high	41	11358	11749	11639	5297	3626	43569	527	10	83
High	9	1633	1221	1067	38	0	3959	49	5.4	81
District I	15	588	539	518	64	30	1739	30	2	58
District II	25	499	367	395	0	0	1261	47	1.9	27
TOTAL	100	14078	13876	13619	5399	3656	50528	653	6.53	77

TABLE 2 : TEACHING EXPERIENCE OF ENGLISH TEACHERS

School Type	1 Year		1-5 Years		5-10 Years		10-20 Years		20+ Yrs		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Senior high	63	11.9	203	38.6	126	22	110	20.4	38	7.2	530
High	10	20.4	21	42.8	9	18.4	5	10.2	4	8.2	49
District I	12	40	13	43.3	3	10	2	6.7	0	0	30
District II	13	28.8	18	40	4	8.8	8	17.8	2	4.4	45
TOTAL	98		225		132		125		44		654

% of English teachers in that school type

TABLE 3 : QUALIFICATIONS OF ENGLISH TEACHERS

School Type	En/Hons		PASS D. En/Maj.		PASS D. En/Units		TCH/CERT En/Maj.		TCH/CERT En/Min.		OTHER		TOTAL
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Senior high	54	9.7	181	32.6	106	19.1	114	20.5	50	9	42	7.6	547
High	1	1.8	20	37	10	18	10	18	6	11.1	7	13	54
District I	0	0	8	27.6	9	31.1	10	34.5	2	6.0	0	0	29
District II	0	0	7	18.4	11	28.9	8	21	10	26.3	2	5.3	38
TOTAL	55		216		136		142		68		51		668

% of English teachers in that school type

TABLE 4 : PROPORTION OF TEACHERS' TIME SPENT TEACHING ENGLISH

School Type	All English		Half English		One English Class		Less Than One Class		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Senior high	412	70	91	15.6	87	15	7	1.2	598
High	23	46	14	28	11	22	2	4	50
District I	7	25	15	53.6	5	19.9	1	3.7	28
District II	4	8	19	39	25	51	0	0	48
TOTAL	446		149		128		10		724

% of English teachers in that school type

TABLE 5 : ENGLISH TEACHERS ON COMMITTEES

School Type	Number	Percentage
Senior high	23	74.3
High	5	16.15
District I	1	3.23
District II	2	6.46
TOTAL	31	

TABLE 6 : MEMBERSHIP OF PROFESSIONAL ENGLISH ASSOCIATIONS

	Senior High		Highs		District I		District II		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
English Teachers' Association of W.A.	101	19	4	8.3	4	13.3	3	6.4	122	17.2
The Reading Teachers' Association of W.A.	13	2.5	1	2.1	0	0	0	0	14	2.1
The English Speaking Board	7	1.3	0	0	1	3.3	0	0	8	1.2
The Speech Teachers' Association	4	0.7	0	0	1	3.3	0	0	5	0.8
W.A. Association for Drama Education	20	3.8	0	0	1	3.3	0	0	21	3.2
Secondary Reading Teachers' Association	9	1.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	1.4
TOTAL	154		5		7		3		169	25.9

TABLE 7 : ROOM CHANGING

School Type	Teach in the same room		Move from room to room	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Senior high	259	49.1	242	45.9
High	45	90.0	5	10.0
District I	23	76.7	7	23.3
District II	35	74.5	12	25.5
TOTAL	362	55.4	266	40.7

TABLE 8 : READING COLLECTION FOR ENGLISH

School Type	Separate Collection	No Separate Collection
Senior high	47	4
High	9	0
District I	15	0
District II	24	1
TOTAL	95	5

TABLE 9 : BOOK PURCHASE FACILITIES AT SCHOOL

School Type	School Shop Sells Books	No School Bookshop
Senior high	18	34
High	4	5
District I	6	9
District II	8	17
TOTAL	36	64

TABLE 10 : ENGLISH JOURNALS IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Journal	Senior High	High	District I	District II	Total
English Journal	12	2	0	0	14
The Use of English	6	1	0	0	7
English in Australia	9	0	0	0	9
English in Education	2	0	0	0	2
TOTAL	29	3	0	0	32

TABLE 11 : ACCESS TO REGIONAL CENTRE

School Type	Reasonable Access	No Convenient Access
Senior high	35	16
High	8	1
District I	9	6
District II	18	7
TOTAL	70	30

TABLE 12 : FACILITIES AVAILABLE TO ENGLISH TEACHERS AND ENGLISH DEPARTMENTS

FACILITY	SENIOR HIGH	HIGH	DISTRICT I	DISTRICT II	TOTAL
A place designated for drama activities	34	4	3	4	45
A place designed for speech activities	21	2	0	1	24
A departmental store-room	45	8	3	4	60
A departmental office	41	7	1	0	49
A departmental staff/ store-room	35	4	1	2	42
TOTAL	176	25	8	11	220

TABLE 13 : CLERICAL OR ANCILLARY ASSISTANCE

SCHOOL TYPE	SUFFICIENT HELP	INSUFFICIENT HELP
Senior high	34	17
High	7	2
District I	12	3
District II	18	7

TABLE 14 : EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE TO ENGLISH TEACHERS

EQUIPMENT	SENIOR HIGH	HIGH	DISTRICT I	DISTRICT II	TOTAL
Tape recorder	52	8	15	25	100
Movie camera	40	4	11	16	72
Record player	51	6	14	24	96
Film projector	52	9	15	24	100
Strip projector	48	9	14	25	97
Television	52	6	13	21	93
Video recorder	51	5	10	16	83
Radio	49	9	14	23	96
Reprographic facilities	36	6	9	13	65
Still camera	32	5	13	19	69
	N=52	N=9	N=15	N=25	N=100

TABLE 15 : APPROPRIATENESS OF REGIONAL CENTRE RESOURCES TO ENGLISH

SCHOOL TYPE	APPROPRIATE	NOT APPROPRIATE	UNCERTAIN
Senior high	27	5	20
High	4	1	5
District I	8	4	3
District II	9	3	11
TOTAL	48	13	39

TABLE 16 : THE TESTING OF READING ATTAINMENT

SCHOOL TYPE	YEAR	ALL STUDENTS TESTED		SOME STUDENTS TESTED		NO STUDENTS TESTED		NO STUDENTS AT THIS LEVEL	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Senior high	8	25	63.2	14	34.1	1	2.4	0	0
	9	6	14.6	27	65.9	2	7.3	0	0
	10	6	14.6	26	63.4	4	9.8	0	0
	11	6	14.6	9	22.0	8	19.5	0	0
	12	2	4.9	6	14.6	9	22.0	0	0
High	8	7	77.8	2	22.2	0	0	0	0
	9	1	11.1	3	33.3	0	0	1	11.1
	10	1	11.1	3	33.3	0	0	1	11.1
District I	8	4	26.7	6	40	3	20	0	0
	9	1	6.7	6	40	4	26.7	0	0
	10	2	13.3	6	40	4	26.7	0	0
	11	1	6.7	0	0	2	13.3	7	46.7
	12	1	6.7	0	0	0	0	9	60.0
District II	8	8	32	3	12	5	20	0	0
	9	4	16	2	8	6	24	0	0
	10	4	16	2	8	6	24	0	0
Total	8	56	62.2	25	27.8	9	10.0	0	0
	9	12	13.3	38	42.2	13	14.4	1	1.1
	10	13	14.4	37	41.1	14	15.4	1	1.1
	11	7	7.8	9	10.0	11	12.2	19	21.1
	12	3	3.3	6	6.7	9	10.0	22	24.4

TABLE 17 : PROPORTION OF TEACHERS' TIME SPENT TEACHING ENGLISH

SCHOOL TYPE	ALL ENGLISH	HALF ENGLISH	ONE ENGLISH CLASS	LESS THAN ONE CLASS	TOTAL
Senior high	412	92	87	7	598
High	23	14	11	2	50
District I	7	14	5	1	28
District II	4	19	25	0	48
TOTAL	446	140	128	10	724

TABLE 18 : CLASSES TAUGHT ENGLISH BY MORE THAN ONE TEACHER

SCHOOL TYPE	NUMBER
Senior high	66
High	5
District I	6
District II	9
TOTAL	86

TABLE 19 : IN-SERVICE EXPERIENCE

TYPE OF IN-SERVICE	SENIOR HIGH	HIGH	DISTRICT I	DISTRICT II	TOTAL
Writing	43	1	3	7	54
Literature	61	8	0	5	74
Language and learning	93	8	3	6	110
Teaching reading	83	4	0	4	91
English as a second language	3	0	1	1	5
The place of English in Interdisciplinary studies	25	3	0	4	32
Spoken English	57	13	5	5	80
Practical drama	94	7	4	6	111
General English	70	7	5	11	93
Remedial English	41	2	0	5	48
The school library	16	0	0	3	19
Programming	44	4	5	7	60
Heterogeneous classes	41	4	4	6	55
TOTAL	671	61	30	70	782

TABLE 20 : USE MADE OF READING TEST RESULTS

USAGE	SENIOR HIGH	HIGH	DISTRICT I	DISTRICT II	TOTAL
Guidance counselling	30	6	3	4	43
Planning remedial programmes	50	9	9	10	78
Grouping students	19	4	3	4	30
Planning courses	18	2	4	7	31

TABLE 21 : PROVISION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL DIFFICULTIES

	SENIOR HIGH		HIGH	DISTRICT I		DISTRICT II	TOTAL	
	8-10	11-12	8-10	8-10	11-12	8-10	8-10	11-12
Withdrawal of small groups for specific purposes	46	7	8	9	1	7	70	8
Extraction of small groups which are stable for at least a term	36	1	3	1	0	3	43	1
By forming remedial classes which meet regularly for part of the curriculum	23	2	3	2	0	2	30	2
By forming classes in which students doe the bulk of their work	13	1	1	2	0	3	19	1
By assistance to the classroom teacher from the remedial teachers in the normal class	15	4	2	1	0	1	19	4
No special provision is made outside the teachers' normal help	3	14	0	4	1	14	21	15

TABLE 22 : AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL DIFFICULTIES FOR WHOM SPECIAL PROVISION IS MADE

SCHOOL TYPE	YEARS 8-10	YEARS 11-12
Senior high	4.09	12.6
High	57.8	-
District I	22.0	-
District II	43.9	-
TOTAL	40.3	12.6

TABLE 23 : BASIS OF STUDENT GROUPINGS

BASIS OF GROUPING	SENIOR HIGH					HIGH			DISTRICT I					DIST.II			TOTAL				
	8	9	10	11	12	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12
Streamed	5	16	24	3	3	0	2	3	5	8	7	0	0	2	0	0	12	26	35	3	3
Graded by English across the whole school's ability range	1	3	5	1	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	3	5	6	2	2
Graded by English across a section of the school's ability range	1	6	6	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	7	7	0	0
Mixed-ability grouping for the whole of the school's ability range, apart from the remedial group	15	7	4	3	3	1	0	0	3	2	3	1	0	3	3	3	22	12	10	4	3
Mixed-ability grouping for the whole of the school's ability range	25	16	9	11	11	6	2	2	7	5	4	3	2	18	19	19	57	43	34	15	13
Mixed-ability grouping for a banded section of the school's ability range	3	3	4	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	5	5	5	0	0
According to course or option	3	0	1	34	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	2	35	36
Variable/non-constant	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	0

TABLE 24 : CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING

CURRICULUM DECISIONS	SENIOR HIGH		HIGH	DISTRICT I		DIST.II	TOTAL	
	8-10	11-12	8-10	8-10	11-12	8-10	8-10	11-12
There is a written English policy statement containing aims and objectives.	38	33	6	7	2	7	59	35
The aims and policy for English are written into the school's aims and policy statement.	10	10	6	4	0	11	31	10
The aims and policy for English are not written but are com monly understood.	12	12	1	3	2	6	22	14
The aims and policy for English are decided by senior staff.	9	10	2	2	1	2	15	11
The aims and policy for English are decided by English teachers as a group.	33	29	8	7	1	7	55	30
The aims and policy for English are decided by the English teachers individually.	7	3	1	5	2	15	28	5
The curriculum content for English is controlled by the centrally issued syllabuses.	2	19	0	0	1	3	5	20
The curriculum content for English is decided by the senior staff.	3	10	1	1	1	0	5	11
The curriculum content for English is decided by English teachers as a group.	34	24	6	2	1	3	45	25
The curriculum content for English is decided by English teachers individually.	22	11	5	13	3	20	61	14

APPENDIX 2

LETTER SENT TO PRINCIPALS OF THE SCHOOL CHOSEN AS CASE STUDIES FOR CIRCULATION TO THE ENGLISH TEACHERS

SURVEY OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

ABOUT THE SURVEY:

The Project is under the auspices of Max Angus, Superintendent of Research, and Peter Gunning, Superintendent of English.

Nancy Martin, formerly head of the English Department at the London University Institute of Education, and Director of the Schools' Council Product, 'Writing across the Curriculum' is here at the invitation of Dr Mossenson to carry out the survey, working with Phil Deschamp of the Research Branch and Marnie O'Neill of the Curriculum Branch.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE SURVEY

(i) A world-wide concern for literacy.

(ii) Changes in education in Western Australia as the result of policy decisions, changes demanding greater knowledge and professional independence by teachers in such matters as

- the development of school based curricula
- setting and monitoring their own BSE examinations
- developing alternative programmes
- engaging in self development programmes in their schools or localities.

THE PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

The purpose of the study is to attempt to build a description of English teaching and learning in Education Department secondary schools so that there is a basis for decisions about resources, teacher development activities, support services and materials. We also think that most teachers of English will be interested in the picture of English teaching and learning that we hope to build up from the schools working in detail with us.

WE ARE ASKING FOR TWO SORTS OF INFORMATION

(i) Information about the resources for English teaching. The questionnaire, which has been sent to all secondary schools in the State will give us this information.

(ii) Information about the use made of those resources - this information to be contributed in a number of ways by a small group of schools which have offered to work with us in some detail.

WHAT WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO DO

1. Allow us (Nancy Martin and Marnie O'Neill, or another) to visit your school, talk to you, visit some of your lessons and discuss English teaching and learning with you, over a period of 5 to 7 days.

2. Let us have a self-description (written or spoken into a tape-recorder) from everyone who teaches English which gives some account of their English programme and how they try to carry it out in their lessons. This can be discussed in more detail when we visit the school.

3. Allow us to join the lessons with a class selected by the teacher, observe what goes on and discuss our observations with us afterwards.

4. Show us some samples of the students' work from this class.

5. Allow us to interview one or two small groups of students about how they see English and its value to them.

6. Allow us to interview the senior staff, and if possible a few parents.

7. Draw our attention to any other things which you think would contribute to a picture of English teaching and learning in the school.

We are particularly interested in the development of reading, and in activities appropriate to a particular school and its community.

HOW THE SCHOOLS WERE CHOSEN

The schools we are working with have been selected from those that offered, and include:

(i) Country and metropolitan schools.
(ii) Large and small schools.
(iii) Schools in high and low socio-economic areas.
(iv) Schools engaging in traditional and innovative approaches.

We hope that the study will show us what are the most significant influences affecting the quality of English teaching and learning.

APPENDIX 3

QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO ALL SCHOOLS

THE SENIOR MASTER (ENGLISH) OR
TEACHER IN CHARGE OF ENGLISH

(Through Principal)

RE: A SURVEY OF ENGLISH TEACHING IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Enclosed are

1. A questionnaire designed to be completed by the English staff.
2. An invitation to offer to participate in a study of English programmes and teaching methods.

This material is part of an attempt to build a description of English teaching in Education Department schools. The purpose of the study is to try to answer the questions below so that there is a basis for decisions about resources, teacher development activities, support services and materials. The questions of particular interest are

a. In what ways is English commonly taught?

b. What emphases are given to the different aspects of English?

c. What resource materials are available to English teachers?

d. What qualifications do English teachers have?

e. What provisions are made for students with special difficulties?

f. How is the English curriculum policy developed, set out, followed and monitored?

g. How are students tested with respect to English and what use is made of the results?

This questionnaire has been sent to all secondary schools and your co-operation is sought to see that it is completed. A firm assurance is given that the information will be used collectively such that no return will be associated with a particular school.

The results from the questionnaire will be used to guide the directions of a study of English teaching that the Education Department is currently running with the assistance of Miss Nancy Martin, a visiting specialist in research into English teaching.

The results of the questionnaire and the subsequent study will be the subject of a report that will make recommendations regarding future directions in English teaching. A copy of the report will be distributed to all schools participating in the questionnaire.

Please feel invited to add any comments you consider to be appropriate. If you have any inquiries regarding the questionnaire please telephone Phil Deschamp at Research Branch (322 1711).

In order to plan the details of the next stages of the study it is important that the questionnaire is returned without delay. Your co-operation in arranging a speedy return is earnestly sought. It would be appreciated if the completed questionnaire was received by, or as soon as possible after, 20th June.

The subject of the study is important to all English teachers and I urge you to give this matter a high priority.

Peter Gunning
SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

NOTE TO THE PRINCIPAL AND STAFF

This questionnaire is intended to provide background information about the direction and resources for English teaching. As you will be aware (especially when you have completed these items) a questionnaire is a speedy but poor way of finding out about what happens in a school. On the basis of the information provided a small group of schools will be invited to attempt to develop a description of English teaching within their school. To prepare the descriptions the schools will engage in discussion of aspects of English teaching and their conclusions will be taped or written into a report. In addition Miss Nancy Martin will visit the schools and discuss the English programme and resources with the staff.

Since such an exploration will depend upon the interest of the teachers involved and the support of the principal we would like to know which schools would be interested in considering being involved with further stages of the project. It would be appreciated if the staff would consider being further involved and express a group reaction below but it may not be possible to take up every offer of participation.

Yes! We would like the school to be offered further participation in this project. ☐

No! We would prefer the school not to be further involved in this project. ☐

PRINCIPAL'S COMMENT

I would like the school to be offered further participation in this project. ☐

I would prefer the school not to be further involved in this project. ☐

NAME OF SCHOOL: ____________________

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INQUIRY INTO READING AND THE USE OF ENGLISH

Please ensure that every box or set of boxes is completed, either with a number of with a tick as appropriate. Please write only one digit per box, e.g.:

9 = 9 and 1 0 9 = 109.

GENERAL SCHOOL INFORMATION

Card No.

Region ______________________

School ______________________

Principal ______________________

Telephone ______________________

School Number	☐☐☐☐		2-5
Senior High	☐	1	6
High	☐	2	
District High I	☐	3	
District High II	☐	4	

1. a. Number on roll on 1st June 1978

Year 8	☐☐☐	7-9
Year 9	☐☐☐	10-12
Year 10	☐☐☐	13-15
Year 11	☐☐☐	16-18
Year 12	☐☐☐	19-21

b. Number of teachers of English	☐☐	22-23
c. How many of these are only part-time in the school?	☐☐	24-25

2. How many teachers teaching English have taught

(a) for less than one year	☐☐	26-27
(b) for between one and five years	☐☐	28-29
(c) for between five and ten years	☐☐	30-31
(d) for between ten and twenty years	☐☐	32-33
(e) more than twenty years?	☐☐	34-35

3. (For the purpose of this question no teacher should be included more than once.)

How many of those teaching English have

a. an honours or higher degree in English	☐☐	36-37
b. a pass degree with an English major	☐☐	38-39

c. a degree in which English is at least one of the units		40-41
d. a Teachers' Certificate or Diploma of Teaching with an English major		42-43
e. a Teachers' Certificate or Diploma of Teaching with an English minor		44-45
f. other (please state)		46-47

. How many of those teaching English

a. spend all their teaching time on English		48-49
b. spend about half their teaching time on English		50-51
c. teach only one class of English		52-53
d. teach less than one class of English?		54-55

. How many classes in your school are taught English by more than one teacher?		56-57

. a. In the past three years, how many of those teaching English have attended an in-service training course of any of the durations shown on any of the following topics.

(Please write the numbers.)

	For from 5 - 10 Days	For from 2-5 Days	For One Whole Day	For Part of one Day	
i. Writing					58
ii. Literature (including Poetry)					59
iii. Language & Learning					60
iv. The Teaching of Reading					61
v. English as a Second Language					62
vi. The place of English in Interdisciplinary Studies					63
vii. Spoken English					64
viii. Practical Drama					65
ix. General English					66
x. Remedial Teaching					67
xi. The School Library					68
xii. Programming					69
xiii. Heterogeneous Classes					70

b. How many different teachers are represented in the above?	☐☐	71-72
7. a. How many teachers of English are members of committees or working parties connected with the teaching or examining of English?	☐☐	73-74
b. How many members of the staff belong to		Card No.
i. The English Teachers' Association	☐☐	6-7
ii. The Reading Teachers' Association of W.A.	☐☐	8-9
iii. The English Speaking Board	☐☐	10-11
iv. The Speech Teachers' Association	☐☐	12-13
v. West Australian Association for Drama Education	☐☐	14-15
vi. Secondary Reading Teachers' Association	☐☐	16-17

ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES FOR ENGLISH

8. How many of the Teachers of English mostly

a. Teach in the same room	☐☐	18-19
b. Move from room to room?	☐☐	20-21

9. a. Which of the following facilities are available for the teaching of English?

(Please tick where appropriate)

i. a place designated for drama activities	☐	22
ii. a place designated for speech activities	☐	23
iii. a departmental store room	☐	24
iv. a departmental office	☐	25
v. a departmental staff/workroom	☐	26

b. Is the work of the English department seriously hampered by a shortage of clerical or ancillary assistance?

YES - 1
NO - 2

☐ 27

10. Which of the following are reasonably available for the teaching of English?

(Please tick the appropriate boxes)

a.	tape recorder	☐	28
b.	movie camera	☐	29
c.	record player	☐	30
d.	film projector	☐	31
e.	strip/slide/loop projector	☐	32
f.	television set	☐	33
g.	video-tape recorder	☐	34
h.	radio	☐	35
i.	reprographic facilities	☐	36
j.	still camera	☐	37

BOOKS AND LIBRARY FACILITIES

11. In the last week for how many periods was the library timetabled for purposes other than library use? ☐☐ 38-39

12. Does the English department have a collection of books available for individual reading?

YES - 1
NO - 2

☐ 40

13. Are there any facilities for the pupils to buy books within the school (e.g. a paperback "Bookshop")?

YES - 1
NO - 2

☐ 41

14. To which of the following journals does the school library subscribe?

a.	English Journal	☐	42
b.	The Use of English	☐	43
c.	English in Australia	☐	44
d.	English in Education	☐	45

15. Is your regional resource centre reasonably accessible to your staff?

YES - 1
NO - 2

☐ 46

16. Does the regional resource centre offer a range of material useful to the teaching of English?

YES - 1
NO - 2 ☐ 47
UNCERTAIN - 3

THE TESTING OF READING ATTAINMENT

17. Indicate the points at which standardised reading tests are administered.

(Please tick the appropriate boxes.)

YEAR	All Pupils	Some Pupils	No Pupils	There are no pupils of this age-range in the school.	
EIGHT	1	2	3	4	48
NINE	1	2	3	4	49
TEN	1	2	3	4	50
ELEVEN	1	2	3	4	51
TWELVE	1	2	3	4	52

18. How is the test information used?

a. Guidance counselling ☐ 53
b. Planning remedial programmes ☐ 54
c. Grouping students ☐ 55
d. Planning courses ☐ 56

PROVISIONS FOR PUPILS WITH READING OR LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

	YEARS 8-10	YEARS 11-12	
19. How many students in your school have come to Australia from a non-English speaking country and have significant difficulties with English?			57-
20. How many Aboriginal students in your school have significant difficulty with English?			61-
21. How many other students have significant difficulty with English?			65-

22. By which of the following methods is special provision made for pupils with reading or language difficulties? (please tick the appropriate box.)

	YEARS 8-10	YEARS 11 & 12	
a. by the withdrawal of individual or very small groups at certain times of the week for certain purposes			69-70
b. by the extraction of groups which remain stable for at least a term			71-72
c. by forming remedial classes which meet regularly for part of the curriculum			73-74
d. by forming remedial classes (or streams) in which students do the bulk of their work			75-76
e. by assistance to the classroom teacher and/or the student from the remedial teacher in the normal class			77-78
f. no special provision is made outside the help that can be given by the teacher during normal lessons			79-80

Card 3

	YEARS 8-10	YEARS 11 & 12	
3. a. For what percentage of the total number of pupils who have significant difficulties with English are you able to make special provision at the moment?			6-9
b. For what percentage of the total number of such pupils do you consider is desirable to have such provision?			10-13

NGLISH TEACHING

4. By what methods are the groups of pupils formed to which English is taught. If there are two or more grouping methods within the year, tick the one to indicate which covers most of the pupils in the year.

	YEAR					
	8	9	10	11	12	
a. streamed						14-18
b. graded by English across the whole of the school's ability range						19-23
c. graded by English across a section of the school's range						24-28
d. mixed ability for the whole of the school's ability range apart from the remedial group						29-33
e. mixed ability for the whole of the school's ability range						34-38
f. mixed ability for a banded section of the school's ability range						39-43
g. according to course or option choice						44-48
h. variable/non-constant						49-53

1. Tick the squares that correspond with the situation in your school

	YEARS 8-10	YEARS 11 & 12	
a. there is a written English policy statement containing aims and objective			54-55
b. the aims and policy for English are written into the school's aims and policy statement			56-57
c. the aims and policy for English are not written but are commonly understood			58-59
d. the aims and policy for English are decided by senior staff			60-61
e. the aims and policy for English are decided by English teachers as a group			62-63
f. the aims and policy for English are decided by the English teachers individually			64-65
g. the curriculum content for English is controlled by the centrally issued syllabi			66-67
h. The curriculum content for English is decided by the senior staff			68-69
i. the curriculum content for English is decided by English teachers as a group			70-71
j. the curriculum content for English is decided by English teachers individually			72-73

COMMENT

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Please return it to

Mr Phil Deschamp
Research Branch
47 Havelock Street
WEST PERTH W.A. 6005.

APPENDIX 4

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS WHO HAVE WORKED WITH US IN THE INQUIRY

1. How many years have you taught English?

2. What different levels and years have you taught?

3. Are your classes streamed or unstreamed or in sets for core subjects? Which do you prefer? Why?

4. What subject do you like teaching best?

5. Did any people, or books, or experiences in your tertiary education - or since - have a *powerful* influence on you; in any direction?

6. Have you ever tried to get educational ideas discussed in any school meeting?

7. How do you like to arrange your classroom? Why?

8. Is it possible for you to exhibit children's work or visual material? Do you think it of value to do this? Why?

9. Do you share any of your work with another teacher - i.e. plan together or pool resources? Is this an advantage?

10. What length are most of your lessons? What length would you like them to be? Why?

11. Is there anything that you use in your lessons that you consider absolutely essential? Why is it essential?

12. Do you think the students' thought, feelings, opinions, experiences have a significant part in English? If you do, please say why.

13. How much do you draw on the outside world? Environment, places, world events, other people's lives, the media?

14. Do you use other forms of representation than language in your work in English?, i.e. music, film, photography, painting, sculpture, movement, mime or drama? Why?

15. If you had an extra sum of money in your teaching budget, how would you use it?

16. Children often work in small groups. What benefit do you see in such small groupings? (Probe for more than one point.)

17. You hear a lot about "building on children's interests". How does this work out in practice? How do you go about it? Actual examples please.

18. Building on children's interests must mean giving them some amount of choice in what they do. Will you describe any choices you have given your pupils in the last week or two?

19. Do you *arrange* for your students to engage in *sustained* spoken utterances? Examples please.

20. Can you describe the things you actively *enjoy* in your lessons? Please give one or two examples.

21. Could you try to describe how you see progress in English.

22. Are you continuously conscious, or not very conscious of the BSE levels of your pupils?

23. How do you deal with students' written work? Give it a mark? A comment? Do you grade it all, or only some of it?

24. If you mark the errors, what happens then? Do the students do corrections or is your marking all that happens? Have you any idea whether your corrections improve the students' work? Have you ever discussed this with your pupils?

25. Are you required to give regular assessments for specific parts of English, e.g. comprehension, book reviews, grammar exercise, etc.?

26. Do you find such required assessments get in the way of other activities you would like to do with your students? What would these other activities be?

27. Do you allow your students to select any of their work for assessment?

28. Do you explain the basis of your grades to them - if you give grades?

29. Is there a school or department policy for marking? Did you have any part in settling it?

30. In a given class, what proportion of the total time for English do you give to the STUDY of English on the one hand (punctuation, grammar, spelling, paragraphing, lay-out, usage, critical terms, analysis of texts, etc.); and on the other hand to the USE of English - i.e. actually using it for *sustained* and continuous purposes such as reading, writing essays, poems, prose of all kinds and initiating and maintaining some spoken utterance?

31. What in English teaching do you *value* most? Defend at all costs?

32. Is there anything else that affects English teaching and learning that you want to tell me?

APPENDIX 5

QUESTIONS FOR STUDENT INTERVIEWS (ABOUT 10 MINUTES)

1. I've been visiting your English lessons this week and would like you to tell me something about how it all strikes you.

   English is your mother tongue - you can all speak it and write it. So what do you think your English programme is in aid of?

   (Probe - what does the whole programme cover?)

2. That last lesson you had - how do you think that fits in with the general aim?

3. What parts of English do you enjoy most?

4. What parts do you think are most useful for you? Why?

5. Which parts do you dislike most? Why?

6. What differences do you notice in the English you do now from what you did, say two years ago?

7. Do you have any views of your own about the quality of your work, or is your teacher's mark your only guide?

8. Is there anything you can do now in English that you could not do, say two years ago? Do you think your ability to read, write or talk has grown? Or got less?

9. Are your views about English at all like those of your parents?

10. Do you ever discuss work, or ideas or books with friends of your own age?

APPENDIX 6

GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR PARENT INTERVIEWS

Introduce by giving reasons for asking to meet a few parents.

We are not attempting to evaluate the work. Teachers are professionals and must evaluate their own work, but we are trying to *collect views of teachers, students and parents about what they want from English studies*, so will you say something about what you want your children to gain from their work in English?

Could I begin by asking you:

- Do you want more for them than you got yourself or the same?
- If more, what should it be?
- What kind of things do you want them to be able to read?
- What kind of things do you want them to be able to talk about?
- Do you think they should be acquainted with the Australian culture - represented in Australian literature, drama, history, economics, etc.
- Do you help them with their English by reading to them when they are small?
- Do you encourage them to buy books?
- Do you read any of the books they read?
- Do you care for them to join in the adult conversations at home?

In general, follow on where the parents lead in the discussion.

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